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SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

IN

TWO VOLUMES,

BY

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LATE RECTOR OF LIVERPOOL.

VOL. II.

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ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

SERMON I. Vol. II.

Prov xxii. *ver.* 6.—*Train up a Child in the Way, he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

THIS text may be conſidered both as a precept and an axiom of the religious or moral kind: Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, is the precept, in which the well-being of ſociety and the intereſts of religion are greatly

concerned: Train him up in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it, is the moral axiom, which, though not univerſally, yet for the moſt part, is true, and conſequently deſerves our attention and regard.

THE Text having no viſible connexion with the antecedent or ſubſequent parts of the context, naturally leads us,

FIRST, To enquire, what that way is, in which a Child is to be trained up.

SECONDLY, What it is to train him up in that way.

THIRDLY, To ſhew that, according to the way, in which he is trained up in his childhood and youth, he will very probably continue to walk to the end of his life.

AND, firſt, the way, in which a Child is to be trained up, is no other than the whole of his duty to God, his neighbour and himſelf. Theſe are the three general heads of human duty. And becauſe the great advantages flowing from a juſt obſervation of the wiſe man's precept do

depend

depend upon a full knowledge of our duty, it will be neceſſary to enumerate the ſeveral particular duties, comprehended under thoſe general heads.

And firſt, of our duty to God: As he is an Eternal, Almighty, Omniſcient, infinitely Wiſe, juſt and good Being, the Creator, Preſerver, and Governor of us and all things in Heaven and Earth, viſible and inviſible; it is our duty to believe and confeſs him to be, both what he is in himſelf, and what he is with relation to us; and alſo, to render unto him all thoſe acts of homage both of Body and Soul, that are due unto him, according to thoſe relations, which he bears to us: To love him with all our Heart and Soul and Mind, as the moſt amiable and perfect Being, as the ſupreme Good, and our greateſt Benefactor. To fear him as the only object of our fear; ſince he only hath infinite power, and all other powers, being derived from him, muſt, of neceſſity, be ſubordinate to his power and will: To put our whole truſt in him, as the only Being, that can and will both hear and help us in all diſtreſs; to call upon him, both in public and private, as the beneficent Being,

from whom all good things do come; and give him thanks and praiſe, as the Donor of all the good things we have received or do enjoy: To ſerve him, according to all thoſe righteous laws he has preſcribed; ſince he who gave us being and faculties of action, hath doubtleſs a juſt right to determine the conditions of that exiſtence, and to direct the exerciſe of the faculties which he gave: To ſubmit our wills to his, ſince as he hath infinite power, it is vain, and as he is infinitely wiſe and good, it is equally unwiſe, to be reluctant to his will, or to reſiſt his counſels. As in the relation of a Governor, his juſtice and mercy are alike infinite, and the meritorious cauſe of all the evils, we ſuffer, is, and muſt be, in ourſelves; it is our duty to confeſs the juſtice of our puniſhment, to ſubmit, with patience, to his kind corrections, and to humble ourſelves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time.—Again, as all cauſes of error are infinitely removed from him, his knowledge being ſuch, that he cannot but underſtand the truth; his goodneſs ſuch, that he cannot be ſuppoſed to delight himſelf with the deluſion of his creatures; his Holineſs and Self-ſufficiency ſuch, that he cannot,

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by any motive, be induced to make a falſe declaration; whatſoever comes attended with ſufficient credentials, to evince its divine authority, as the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament do, that ſurely hath a juſt title to the ſubmiſſion of our underſtanding, (i. e.) to our aſſent and belief, and ought to be received, as it is in truth, the word of God. Laſtly, a proportionate eſteem is alſo due to his Sacred Name, and whatſoever it be, that hath the leaſt relation to him or his ſervice, ſuch as are his Sabbaths, his Sanctuaries; yea, and his Miniſters alſo, ſo far as they act up to the character they bear.

WHAT was juſt now ſaid concerning our obligation to aſſent to a divine Revelation, ſuggeſts to us a new claſs of duty, as we are Chriſtians. For in the Goſpel, that laſt revelation of the will of God to man, we are taught, that God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf: To him, as being the only begotten Son of God, the ſame acts of homage are to be paid as to the Father. For, according to that revelation, every tongue muſt confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord to the Glory of God the Father,

Father, and all men are required to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: By this revelation alſo, the Holy Ghoſt is to be worſhipped, as one of the three Perſons in the Holy and undivided Trinity, and as concurring in the great work of our Salvation. And although it may indeed be ſuppoſed, that the *wiſe* man had not theſe duties, conſidered as Chriſtian, and relative to the perſonal acts of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, in the great work of our redemption in his view; yet we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, it would have been otherwiſe, had he lived after the revelation of this myſtery by the Goſpel. Theſe are the poſitive duties flowing from thoſe relations that God bears to us, as Creator, Governor, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

The negative duties flowing from the ſame relations are theſe which follow, viz. That we acknowledge no other God beſides him; that we ſet up no Idols in our hearts or imaginations; that we neither love nor fear any thing ſo much as God; that we do not diſbelieve his word, nor tranſgreſs his laws, nor murmur at his diſpenſations, nor diſtruſt his promiſes, nor deſpair of his mercy and goodneſs, nor ceaſe to implore

implore his aid, nor ungratefully forget his benefits; that we do not profane his Holy Name, his Sabbaths nor his Sanctuaries, nor deſpiſe his word, nor vilify his Miniſters; nor in any wiſe act contrary to thoſe obligations, that neceſſarily flow from any or all thoſe relations, that ſubſiſt between God and us.

SECONDLY.—The next branch of human duty is that, which we owe to our neighbour; and it is founded on that relation, which we bear to each other, as creatures of the ſame common Creator, children of the ſame common parents by nature, and of the ſame heavenly Father, by adoption and grace, made up of the ſame conſtituent parts, endued with like paſſions, and ſubject to the like failings, infirmities and wants. From this ſimilitude of nature only, this general duty flows, viz. That we ſhould do to others, as we would, they ſhould do to us; and that we ſhould not do that to another, which we would not have done to ourſelves.—This general obligation divides itſelf into many particular branches, deducible in manner following: For as much as no man willeth, that another ſhould injure him in his perſon, goods

or

or reputation; therefore it is the voice of nature and reaſon, that neither ought any man to be guilty of doing any ſuch injuries to his neighbour: He would not, that others ſhould deceive him; therefore, neither ought he to deceive others: As he would, that others ſhould relieve him in want, deliver him out of danger, and comfort him in affliction; ſo he ought to look upon himſelf, as bound to perform the ſame offices of humanity to other men: He would not, that his ſuperiors ſhould behave themſelves towards him with inſolence and contempt; therefore, it is his duty to avoid all ſuch inſolence towards his inferiors, and towards all mankind. He would not, that other men ſhould take all advantages againſt him, when by any offence he hath made himſelf obnoxious to their diſpleaſure; therefore, neither ſhould he be ſevere in the proſecution of thoſe, that have injured or offended him. In ſhort, by this familar and equitable rule of reaſoning every man may eaſily deduce his obligation to truth, juſtice, humanity, candor, compaſſion, charity, forgiveneſs, patience, long-ſuffering and all other ſocial virtues and duties.

Besides theſe duties, thus flowing from that general relation, which all men bear to each other, there are others founded upon particular, political or natural relations; the moſt conſiderable of which, it may not be improper to mention in this place. The principal relation in communities is that of governor or civil parent, who, as he is the head of the body politic, and is concerned for the ſafety of the whole, muſt doubtleſs have a right to the obedience of all his ſubjects in things lawful. As the deſign of his inſtitution is to protect them in the peaceable poſſeſſion of their rights and properties, and the undiſturbed enjoyment of the gifts of Providence; ſo are they in all reaſon obliged to contribute chearfully to the ſupport of his authority. His eminent ſtation entitles him to the eſteem; and his care and labours for the public welfare to the love and affection of all his ſubjects. Our obligation to theſe duties is much ſtrengthened by that relation which he bears to God, as his immediate, viſible Miniſter here on earth; for it is by him, that Kings reign and Princes decree juſtice.—By the ſame way of reaſoning, the ſubordinate and inferior magiſtrate will appear to have a

title to the ſame duties in a juſt proportion.—To be given to change, to traduce and cenſure the public Adminiſtration without cauſe, to embarraſs the Prince's deſigns for the public good, to betray his counſels, to queſtion his authority and conſpire againſt his perſon and the public peace, are moſt pernicious ways; in which it is very dangerous to walk ourſelves, and moſt impious to train up thoſe, that are under our care and influence.

THE relation next to this in dignity is, that we bear to our natural parents: To them in their proportion the ſame duties are to be performed, as to God and the civil parent: Love and Reverence are due to them, as the immediate authors of our exiſtence: Honor and Obedience, as being, by divine appointment, veſted with a right of government over us; and beſides theſe, ſupport and maintenance, if they be in want; becauſe it would be extremely ungrateful and unjuſt to ſuffer them to want any returns, which it is in our power to make, which how many and great ſoever they may be, can never equal their benefits to us.

THIRDLY.

THIRDLY.—The laſt general claſs of human duty is that, which comprehends thoſe particular duties which we owe to ourſelves; and theſe flow both from that relation we owe to God and to our neighbour; for they both have a right and intereſt in us; and alſo from that principle univerſally imprinted upon all animals, the great law of Self-preſervation. Whatever duties we owe to our neighbour are firſt to be diſcharged at home; every man is neareſt and deareſt to himſelf. It is the duty of every man to do himſelf right in thoſe methods, which the laws of God and man have preſcribed: He is bound by the law of charity to be helpful to others, and by the law of ſelf-love to promote his own welfare; and conſequently ought neither to injure others nor himſelf; and hence ariſes his obligation to ſobriety, temperance and chaſtity; becauſe the oppoſite vices are very deſtructive of the peace and welfare of ſociety, and eſpecially of his own; and alſo to diligence in his particular calling; for this improves not only his eſtate, but alſo the faculties of the body and mind; whereas the contrary vice conſumes the former and enervates the latter. There never was, nor ever will be, a

man of worth or virtue without diligence, which is the beſt fence againſt all kinds of temptation and miſchief; whereas ſloth and idleneſs are the avenues to them all.

I might enlarge further on this point; but I ſhall only obſerve, that our obligation to all the duties above mentioned, is much enforced by the poſitive commands of God, enjoining them; and by that ſpiritual affinity, that is between us, as members of the myſtical body of Chriſt. For if a bare communion of nature will ſuggeſt to us a ſtrict obligation to all the ſocial and private or perſonal duties, above mentioned; how much more the conſideration of our being fellow-citizens with the Saints and of the houſehold of God; heirs of God and joint heirs with Chriſt, deſtined to be (if we perform the conditions required on our parts) partakers with the Saints in light of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for us, of which holy ſociety no diſorderly or irregular perſon can be a member; and into which happy place, nothing that is defiled can ever enter? Thus have I endeavoured to deſcribe, as particularly as could well

well be done in a diſcourſe of this nature, that way in which a child is to be trained up; to the end that he may walk therein through all the ſucceeding ſcenes of life.

SECONDLY.—I proceed now to enquire what is meant by training him up in this way. To train is a term uſed in warfare, which implies ſomething more than barely informing a man concerning the duties, which he is to perform, viz. actually exerciſing him in thoſe duties, until he hath acquired both the theory and practice of his profeſſion; till repetition of duty hath produced an habit, dexterity, and delight in the performance of it. This is a very proper term, whereby to expreſs the great care, that is required in the education of a ſervant of God, or a true Diſciple of Chriſt, of a good man or good Chriſtian. The ſervice of God or the Chriſtian life, being a continual warfare againſt the Devil, the World and the Fleſh. And, therefore, as he would be but an imprudent General, that ſhould only put books of military diſcipline into the hands of his ſoldiers; and then, without any previous exerciſe, lead them out againſt the enemy: So would he be a

moſt

moſt unwiſe Parent or Tutor, that ſhould expect perſeverance in duty from his child or pupil, by barely telling him, what he ought or ought not to do; and yet take no care to enforce a ſuitable obedience. Theory without practice was never found ſufficient to make a profeſſor in the myſteries of Art, much leſs in the duties of Morality and Religion. Knowledge, it muſt be confeſſed, is neceſſary to the performance of duty; but then practice is neceſſary to the perfection of knowledge; and eſpecially in matters of Religion, it is the very end at which knowledge aims. Knowledge and practice do mutually promote each other: That directs and diſpoſes to practice, and this perfects knowledge. Mere ſpeculation is a very raw and rude thing, in compariſon of that knowledge, that is gained by experience. It is one thing to be told how this or that thing is to be done, another to be able to follow ſuch direction. Rules, though plain, may ſometimes be miſtaken; but repeated experience is ſeldom deceived. It is not always found, that he, who knows both what he is to do and how, is either willing or able to act up to his knowledge; and the only method of making him both willing and able is, firſt, to

repreſent

repreſent to him the happy conſequences of his obedience and the danger of diſobedience; and then to oblige him frequently to do that which is required of him, till his knowledge and ability paſs into an habit and delight in virtue: Nothing leſs will ſecure his perſeverance. It is, therefore, equally neceſſary to form the manners as to inform the minds of children, to inure them to the practice, as to infuſe into their minds true and ſound principles of religion.

And now, the ſubſtance of what hath been ſaid upon the preceptive part of the text, may, according to the preſent ſtate of Religion, be compriſed in the following Paraphraſe: Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, (i. e.) begin betimes to inform him, both what he is to believe and to do: Infuſe into his ſoul a firm perſuaſion of the exiſtence of a Deity, and right notions of his glorious and tremendous Majeſty; of his eternity, infinite power, knowledge, wiſdom, juſtice, goodneſs, mercy, truth; that as this great and glorious God created the world and all things that are therein, ſo he governs it by the moſt wiſe and righteous laws; that at the

the Great Day of Account, the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal: Acquaint him with the great myſtery of our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, his only begotten ſon; inculcate a firm dependence upon the promiſes of God; a fear of his threatenings; a reliance upon his providence; ſubmiſſion to his diſpenſations; reſignation to his will; the neceſſity of private and public worſhip; of praying to God for all he wants, and of making the moſt grateful acknowledgements to him for all he has received; of paying a due reverence to his moſt ſacred name; of hallowing the ſabbath day; of liſtening with attention to the word of God, and of keeping his foot, when he goeth into his houſe; reſorting to that ſacred place with inward diſpoſitions, and there abiding with an outward demeanour, ſuited to the Majeſty of that God, who hath his more eſpecial reſidence there; and to the proper deſign of his own appearance before him: Inculcate alſo the principles of loyalty and ſubmiſſion to his civil governors and ſuperiors; of filial duty to his parents; of humility, juſtice, truth, fidelity, benevolence, charity, patience, forbearance and forgiveneſs towards

towards all men: Teach him the neceſſity of diligence, ſobriety, temperance and chaſtity; add to all this a proper information concerning the nature and number of his ſpiritual enemies, and the neceſſary means and methods of his defence; and as much, as lies in you, engage him by exhortation, reproof, reſtraint, and by correction, when milder methods fail, to live up to ſuch a religious inſtitution, as the only ſure method of making him, by the Grace of God, when he comes to riper years, a good man and a good Chriſtian, a good ſubject, huſband, parent, neighbour and friend.

And thus we proceed, Thirdly, to prove, that according to the way wherein any one is trained up in his Childhood and Youth, be it good or bad, he will moſt probably continue to walk in his Manhood and Age. Many a man hath found it a very hard taſk to unlearn one evil habit, contracted in his youth. Every one knows, that the prejudices of education are the hardeſt of all other to be removed. In this our preſent lapſed eſtate there is in all mankind a ſenſual principle, diſpoſing them to evil, which, if not early reſiſted, will ſoon produce vicious

actions; a repetition of which will produce evil habits and cuſtoms, which are the natural cauſes of all thoſe diſorders and calamities, that afflict mankind. It is to be feared, that there are many wretched ſpirits involved in everlaſting miſery, that are now lamenting that fatal negligence, that cruel indulgence in their minority, which was the principal cauſe, that ever they came into that place of torments. So true it is, that it is better to be unborn than unbred, or, which is the ſame thing, ill-bred; that he who ſpareth the rod, when milder methods take no effect, hateth his ſon.

No careful obſerver can be ignorant how many families have been and daily are reduced to poverty and diſtreſs, by the intemperance, exceſs, idleneſs, debauchery, extravagance and outrage of thoſe, whoſe wickedneſs is to be aſcribed chiefly to the want of an early and preventing education: So greatly is the intereſt of private families concerned in the obſervation of this precept. And when the neglect grows general, and the vices of ſuch untaught and undiſciplined profligates ſpread ſo far, as from perſonal to become national; they weaken and

ſometimes

ſometimes overturn government itſelf, and bring down national judgments from God. Now this evil, ſenſual principle, which hath ſuch dreadful effects, is to be controlled only by diſcipline and the infuſion of contrary principles; which diſcipline is never like to have its full effect upon the minds of men, if it be not begun and carried on during their minority; whilſt their tempers are yet ductile, capable of receiving and apt to receive good impreſſions. For when the mind hath been prepoſſeſſed with ill principles, and hardened by ill practices, it grows callous, rendering the ſucceſs of any after-applications very doubtful, if not deſperate. For though the mind of man ſhould be equally diſpoſed to receive good or bad impreſſions at the firſt; yet thoſe which it firſt receives, it longeſt retains. Let virtue or vice have the firſt poſſeſſion, and they will either of them, for ſome time, make good their tenure.

I need add nothing to what I have already ſaid; to prove the truth of this aſſertion with reſpect to vicious impreſſions; and to prove it true of their contraries, I have a popular argument to produce, which may ſerve inſtead of a

thouſand:—I mean the declaration of the great and good Lord Ruſſel, juſt before his execution in 1683, "I do moſt heartily bleſs God (they are his own words) for thoſe many bleſſings, which he in his infinite mercy hath beſtowed upon me, in the whole courſe of my life; particularly, that I was born of worthy and good parents, and had the advantage of a religious education, which is the moſt invaluable bleſſing: For even when I minded it leaſt, it ſtill hung about me, and hath now for many years ſo influenced and poſſeſſed me, that I feel the happy effects of it in this my extremity, in which, I thank God, I have been ſo wonderfully ſupported, that neither my impriſonment, nor the fears of death, have been able to diſcompoſe me in any degree; but on the contrary, I have ſenſibly felt the aſſurances of the Love and Mercy of God in and through my bleſſed Redeemer, in whom alone I truſt; and I do not queſtion, but that I am going to partake of that fulneſs of joy, which is in his preſence. Theſe hopes, therefore, do ſo wonderfully delight me, that I reckon this the moſt happy, though ſome may look upon it, as the moſt tragical ſcene of my life." Behold here the powerful and permanent

nent influence, as well as moſt deſirable effects of a Religious Education. What need have we of arguments from reaſon, when experience proves, that if you train up a child in the way he ſhould go, he will not depart from it, when he is old? But is it always thus? Is a good and early education always attended with ſuch happy effects and conſequences? This we cannot affirm. We muſt be content, that it is for the moſt part ſo. It is indeed more eaſy and more common for the ſenſual principle and even converſation to prevail over good diſcipline and good converſation, than the latter over the former. The more ought we to pity thoſe, that lie in the way of contagion, that are expoſed on every ſide to ſtrong temptations to ſin, with little reaſon and leſs religion to ſupport them in the conteſt. The more ready ſhould we be to eſtabliſh them in the knowledge, and to aſcertain their progreſs in the paths of virtue and true religion, by a religious and preventing education; and it is a ſufficient motive and encouragement to every good man, that our ſucceſs will generally be proportionable to our endeavours, and for the moſt part anſwer our expectation.

It now remains, that we apply the doctrines delivered in this diſcourſe. We have ſhewn what that way is, wherein children are to be trained up, that, as they advance in life, they may continue to walk in the ſame; that by training them up in this way, is meant not only the right information of their minds, but alſo the forming of their manners; not only inſtructing them in the fundamental principles of religion and morality, but actually obliging them to live up to thoſe principles; that without ſuch cultivation, ſo ſtrong is the ſenſual principle in man, I might have added too, ſo corrupt is the age in which we live, and ſo prevailing the influence of evil example, that they will almoſt univerſally run headlong into vice and ruin, out of which it is hardly poſſible after to reclaim or recover them; and on the contrary, that by an early cultivation of their minds and formation of their manners, they will, in all moral probability, receive into a good heart the ſeminal principles of piety and virtue; which will, by degrees, take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards, ſome thirty, ſome ſixty, and ſome one hundred-fold. That theſe propoſitions are generally true, we

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are aſſured from ſcripture, reaſon and experience; and alſo, that the welfare of private perſons and families, and of the whole community, is infinitely concerned in the due obſervation of this precept. If ſuch then be the general conſequences of a religious or irreligious education; if the temporal and eternal peace and happineſs of ſo many depend upon the right diſcipline of youth; duty, intereſt, charity, and zeal for the glory of God, do all conſpire to induce us to uſe our beſt endeavours to promote an early education of youth in the ways of wiſdom. But above all others, the natural parents, the clergy, ſchoolmaſters, and all thoſe to whoſe care the education of youth is committed, are moſt bound to look well to the religious education of their children and pupils; bringing them up in the nature and admonition of the Lord. That parent who is deficient in this important article of his duty, is guilty of a moſt criminal omiſſion, that will in the iſſue prove deſtructive both of his own and his children's temporal and eternal welfare: By his neglect he becomes a partaker of his children's crimes, and conſequently will be accountable for them. And, indeed, there is no neglect,

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which God will puniſh with greater ſeverity than this. Eli's exemplary puniſhment, who, when his ſons made themſelves vile, reſtrained them not, deſerves to be often in the thoughts of all thoſe, to whom the care of education is committed. "Behold I will do a thing in Iſrael," they are the words of God to Samuel, "at which both the ears of every one, that heareth it ſhall tingle: In that day I will perform againſt Eli all things which I have ſpoken concerning his houſe: When I begin, I will alſo make an end: I have told him, that I will judge his houſe for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile and he reſtrained them not. And, therefore, have I ſworn unto the houſe of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's houſe ſhall not be purged with ſacrifice nor offering for ever."

EVERY good man is greatly ſenſible of the prevailing wickedneſs of the preſent generation, and doth ſincerely wiſh, he could find out an effectual method of promoting a general reformation of manners; and various are the means, that have been deviſed, and put in practice for this purpoſe. But ſo long as parents are negligent

gligent in the education of their children, and much more if by their own wickedneſs and evil example they take off the deformity of vice and leſſen the fear of God upon their minds, all thoſe pious endeavours will be, though not altogether, vain; yet greatly diſappointed, and fall vaſtly ſhort of the great and good end propoſed. Children walk by imitation, and are not eaſily brought to believe, that they do wrong, when they do or ſay, what they daily ſee and hear their parents do and ſay; yea, they ſoon learn their evil habits, and glory in that, which is their own and their parents' ſhame.—Here then lies the ſource of the diſeaſe, which, it is to be feared, will be incurable; until parents themſelves can be firſt reformed and prevailed upon, not only to inſtil good principles into their children, but alſo to recommend religion and virtue by their own good example; which if they do not, they will defeat all the labours of good and pious men, and render their endeavours abortive; and how great their guilt and puniſhment muſt be, it is ſcarce poſſible for me to ſay or you to conceive. How terrible will be the thought, when they ſhall perceive, that by their neglect and evil example they have in-

volved their children in everlaſting miſery, and thereby greatly aggravated their own? How will they be confounded, when God ſhall ariſe terribly to judgment, and ſhall thus expoſtulate with them? Behold the children, which I gave you: They were ignorant, and you inſtructed them not: They were wicked and you reſtrained them not; but made them worſe by your own evil examples: Unnatural wretches! That have thus deſtroyed thoſe, whoſe happineſs by ſo many bonds of duty and affection, you were obliged to promote. The books are now open and there is no memorial, no not ſo much as of one hour, that was ever ſeriouſly ſpent in training them up to a ſenſe of God, and the knowledge of their Duty; but on the contrary, it appears, that you have many ways contributed to their ruin, and helped forward their damnation. How could you be ſo impious and unnatural? How much better had it been for you and them, that neither they nor you had ever been born? Would not ſuch a charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? Would it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very ſoul? On the other hand as nothing can make parents more happy, than a

well-grounded

well-grounded hope, that all their children are in the favour of God at preſent, and ſhall be eternally rewarded by him hereafter, let them but imagine, that when they ſhall appear together with their children before the tribunal of God, they could ſay to their heavenly Father concerning them, as our Saviour did concerning his Diſciples: "Of thoſe, which thou gaveſt me, have I loſt none;" and then tell me how great would be their joy? In this caſe there is no doubt, but that there would ſpring up in their minds ſuch a rapturous delight, as no heart can conceive, nor tongue of men or angels can expreſs.

I have now nothing farther to add on this ſubject, but to exhort all parents ſeriouſly to conſider theſe things; and earneſtly to entreat them, as they tender the temporal and eternal happineſs of their children, with which their own is cloſely connected, as they deſire that the fruit of their own bodies ſhould not periſh through their neglect, nor the blood of their own children cry out at the laſt day for vengeance againſt them; that they would be careful and diligent to train them up betimes to truth and

virtue, and teach them to do juſtice, to love mercy and walk humbly before God. And now let us devoutly pray, that theſe conſiderations may be duly attended to by all thoſe, to whom the care of education is committed, and that the pious endeavours of all thoſe that are faithful in the diſcharge of this important duty, may be attended with the deſired ſucceſs.—Now, to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed, as is moſt due, Dominion and Majeſty, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for ever.—*Amen.*

SERMON II.

SERMON II.

[On CHARITY.]

Matthew xxv. *ver.* 40.—*And the King ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, Verily I ſay unto you; in as much as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

IF we look back to the 14th verſe of this chapter, we ſhall perceive, that the whole ſcope of it, from that verſe to the end, is to ſhew to men of every condition, that are in any wiſe able to relieve ſuch as are fit objects of Charity, their obligation to comply with the gracious deſign of Providence, by being charitable, according to their ability; and to enforce their

their obedience by the moſt powerful motives. To this end our divine Teacher puts us in mind, that we are not Proprietors, but only Stewards, of the things we poſſeſs; accountable, according to the talents we receive, which are to be improved and employed to the Glory of God, and benefit of our Brethren. And then, as if the happineſs of our fellow-creatures was his chief aim, and the promotion thereof the beſt way of advancing his glory; he tells us, that our final ſentence, when he ſhall come to judge the world, will turn chiefly upon our fidelity and induſtry in the diſcharge of this great truſt.

The whole paſſage, which muſt neceſſarily incline the heart of every true Diſciple of Chriſt to the faithful diſcharge of this duty, is as follows:—When the Son of man ſhall come in his glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory, and before him ſhall be gathered all nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, the righteous from the unrighteous, as a ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from the goats; placing thoſe on his right hand, theſe on his left. Thoſe, becauſe

becauſe they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirſty, clothed the naked, viſited the ſick and impriſoned, and took the ſtranger in; he will put into the immediate poſſeſſion of an everlaſting kingdom; ſaying, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Theſe, becauſe they did not in ſuch wiſe miniſter to the neceſſities of their brethren, he will command to depart from him into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels; intimating at the ſame time, that in as much as the former had done theſe things to the leaſt of his brethren, and the latter had not; they had been kind or cruel even to himſelf: And, therefore, theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal.

And here let us ſtop a while to admire and adore the infinite wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs of God. We think his ways unequal, but his ways are equal, ours unequal; and were not ours, his would never be accounted ſuch.—Let but the rich and the poor faithfully perform their reſpective duties, and all murmurings againſt Providence will ceaſe. How very kind

kind is he, who makes himſelf a debtor to us for the good deeds we do to each other. He conſiders our Charity, as if himſelf had been the object, and reſents our Uncharitableneſs, as a neglect of himſelf. It will little avail the Uncharitable to ſay, when ſaw we thee an hungered, or athirſt, or a ſtranger, or naked, or ſick or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee? He will anſwer: In as much as ye did not do theſe things to the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye did them not to me. And who will impeach the juſtice of that ſentence, which pronounces, that he ſhall periſh without mercy, that hath ſhewed no pity (I might without much impropriety ſay) neither to God nor man?

HAVING thus ſhewed you the reaſonableneſs and indiſpenſible neceſſity of our exerciſing ourſelves in all acts of Charity of every kind, as we have opportunity. I ſhall now proceed in a further diſcourſe upon the words of the text, to apply them to the preſent occaſion, by deſcribing; firſt, the moſt proper objects of your charity, the leaſt of theſe my brethren.

SECONDLY, the Duty itſelf:—In as much as ye have done it. And, laſtly, the motives to it; ye have done it unto me. As

As to the firſt thing propoſed, I conceive, we ſhall eaſily apprehend, what our Saviour means by the leaſt of his brethren, by conſidering in how many different meanings, the words, little ones, are uſed in Holy Scripture. And, firſt, by little ones are meant children, not in a figurative, but literal ſenſe; little ones in age and ſtature. Thus are the words uſed, (Gen. XLVI. ver. 5,) The ſons of Jacob carried their father, and their little ones, and their wives in the wagons, which Pharaoh had ſent. Such as theſe, doubtleſs, are included by our Saviour in that expreſſion, the leaſt of my brethren. For when his Diſciples rebuked thoſe that brought infants to him, that he might touch them, he called them unto him, and ſaid, Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of ſuch is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hand upon them, and bleſſed them.

SECONDLY.—As the rich and powerful are often called great ones in the ſame holy ſcripture; ſo by little ones are to be underſtood the poor, whoſe offices in life, by reaſon of their neceſſitous circumſtances, are mean and ſervile. And

the more indigent they are, the more properly the denomination belongs to them. This ſenſe of the words is found Jer. xxiv. 3, where it is ſaid, that their nobles ſent their little ones to the waters, who returned with their veſſels empty; which latter clauſe plainly intimates, that theſe little ones were not infants, but people of low condition. And this is the language not of Scripture only, but the Phraſe of every Nation.

LASTLY.—By little ones are to be underſtood, ſuch as are yet but infants in knowledge, children in underſtanding, weak in faith, not ſufficiently inſtructed in the principles of Religion; or, for want of a faithful guide and monitor, too little guarded againſt the temptations of every kind, to which they are perpetually expoſed.

THESE are to be added to the catalogue of the leaſt of our Lord's Brethren.—Theſe are thoſe babes; to whom firſt, it pleaſed God to reveal the ſaving truths of the Goſpel: And with reſpect to theſe principally, it is, that our Saviour hath ſaid, (Luke xvii. 1, 2,) It is impoſſible,

poſſible, but that offences will come, but woe unto that man, through whom they come. It were better for him that a millſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the Sea; than that he ſhould offend one of theſe little ones; ſuch little ones (Matthew xviii. 6,) according to St. Matthew, as believed in him; pointing, perhaps, at the ſame time to the multitude, whom the Phariſees were endeavouring to lead into the crime of rejecting the Goſpel.

By little ones in general, therefore, we are to underſtand ſuch whoſe tender helpleſs age, whoſe poverty and ignorance, weakneſs in Faith or want of inſtruction, render them wretched; and conſequently fit objects of our pity and compaſſion: And the more of theſe wants are found in them, the greater objects they are.— And, therefore, though they be the leaſt in the judgment of ſome, yet are they the leaſt of all to be deſpiſed. Our bleſſed Lord came to ſeek and to ſave thoſe, that were loſt; and it is our great duty, and will be our higheſt glory, to ſeek and ſave thoſe, that otherwiſe would be loſt. Man, in his moſt abject condition, is a being of great price in God's eſteem. The leaſt

are equally the effects of his Creative Power with the greateſt; equally the objects of his providential care. Humility, contentment, induſtry and honeſty are as acceptable in the poor, as liberality, juſtice and humanity in the rich. The former are equal to the latter in nature, and, if it be not their own fault, may be ſo in grace here, and in glory hereafter.

And thus you ſee, all thoſe qualifications, that are required in the proper objects of your Charity, are found in thoſe, whoſe cauſe we are now pleading. They are little ones in fortune, age, ſtature and underſtanding: Many of them orphans, deſtitute of all the benefits of parental care, expoſed to all the evils attendant upon idleneſs, ignorance, indigence and ill examples; and would remain in that unhappy ſtate, were it not that in theſe ſanctuaries, which Charity hath provided for them, they find ſubſiſtence, inſtruction, and parental care. In a word, they are the brethren of Chriſt; their nature he was pleaſed to take upon him; their advocate he was, and for them he did not diſdain to die.

HAVING thus found the objects, let us now conſider the duties to be performed by us to them, intimated in thoſe words, In as much as ye have done theſe things. Theſe words refer us to what our Lord had ſaid before. I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, &c. whence we learn, that we are to feed theſe little ones, when hungry; give them drink, when thirſty; clothe them, when naked; take them in, when, like ſtrangers, they have no habitation; viſit them, when ſick; and though ſuch little ones as theſe, are ſeldom found in priſons, yet there are chains, in which they are often held, and which we muſt endeavour to break off, looſing the bands of wickedneſs, as the Prophets ſpeaks, and taking away every yoke. It muſt be confeſſed, that, in the context, acts of Charity to the bodies of men are only mentioned; but we muſt be ſure to give due attention to their ſpiritual wants alſo. The ſupply of theſe muſt be ſo much more pleaſing to God, as the ſoul is of more value than the body; and eternity of more conſequence than a moment. If we are obliged to bind up the wounds, and heal the ſores, incident to the bodies of men; doubtleſs we are obliged to contribute, with all readineſs

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of mind, to the cure of their ſpiritual maladies. If we are to adminiſter to our indigent brethren the meat, which periſheth, how much more that, which endureth unto everlaſting life? In ſhort, we muſt not only open wide our hands in bounty to the relief of the temporal neceſſities of our brethren, but we muſt alſo inſtruct, exhort, reprove, and labour to convert the ſinner from the error of his way, and ſave a ſoul from death. Theſe little ones, who are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſts, are they, whom we ſhould teach knowledge and make to underſtand doctrine; laying precept upon precept, and line upon line, here a little, and there a little. To have been inſtrumental in ſaving a ſoul from eternal death, is much more glorious than to have routed armies, or ſubdued kingdoms. Such an act of Charity, as this, brings more glory to God and good to man, than myriads of benefactions, that extend their good influence no farther than to the body only, and ſhall receive a greater reward; for they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine, as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they, that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever.

If any one ſhould now ſay, How ſhould we be able to comply with all theſe conditions? Many of us are by no means qualified either in point of wealth or underſtanding. Behold I ſhew you a moſt eaſy and practicable method. Every mite, you give to the ſupport of theſe ſchools for the education of poor children, reaches both to the body and the ſoul; relieves thoſe, that are emphatically little ones, both in a literal and figurative ſenſe; feeds the hungry; clothes the naked; and contributes to make the infant grow up, as in ſtature, ſo in wiſdom and favour with God and man; reſcues childhood from all the evils incident to a ſtate of idleneſs, ignorance and want; and from all the temptations both of theſe and evil example; by which, as they grow up, they are wont, by a too quick progreſſion, to be engaged in baſe and wicked courſes; loſe all ſenſe of ſhame; commit ſin with greedineſs, and continue therein without repentance or remorſe. In a word, this Charity, in ſome ſort, comprehends all other Charities; and by it the poor are relieved in more kinds than thoſe, upon which our Saviour hath aſſured us, that ſentence ſhall be paſſed, by which the Charitable ſhall be entitled to endleſs felicity, in the kingdom of their Father.

You ſee then, that the good effects of ſuch benefactions are both great and many, and they are not leſs durable. For if we train up a child in the way he ſhould go, we are aſſured, that when he is old, he will not depart from it. As it is not eaſy to reclaim a perſon, that hath been brought up under the power of vicious principles and practices, to perſuade him to abandon his evil habits, even when he is in ſome degree convinced of the fatal conſequences of them; ſo neither is it an eaſy matter for one educated under a contrary diſcipline to paſs immediately from the liberty of virtue to the ſlavery of ſin. The deſcent into vice, it muſt be owned, is far more eaſy, than the aſcent to virtue. But when the conſcience hath been rightly informed, and its authority, in ſome degree, eſtabliſhed by good diſcipline, it will ſtruggle hard, before it be entirely ſubdued: And if the chaſtiſements of the Almighty ſet in to its aid againſt the ſolicitations of luſt, the influence of evil example, and the wicked ſuggeſtions of the great enemy of mankind, it ſeldom fails to reclaim the ſinner from the error of his way; to bring him to repentance, and to reſtore him to the dominion of himſelf. And, if

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by this means many come at laſt to die within the arms of mercy, you will readily admit, that your benefactions have had a laſting influence indeed. How widely different, for the moſt part, is the condition and the end of thoſe, who have wanted the benefit of ſuch an early and preventing education; who have, if any, but obſcure notions of God and religion, are under no reſtraint from ſin, except that of the fear of temporal puniſhment only, which they flatter themſelves, they ſhall eaſily eſcape, and ſo ſin on without remorſe; yea, hearken not to the rod of the Almighty, nor conſider, who hath appointed it; being the diſgrace of human nature, the peſts of ſociety, objects of every good man's compaſſion, yet ordinarily incapable of relief, and for the moſt part going out of the world in the ſame ſtupidity, wherein they lived in it?

THERE is another remark, that deſerves to be added here, viz. That the good effects of theſe benefactions are not leſs diffuſive than durable. It is in the higheſt degree probable, that children thus educated under a regular œconomy, early inſtructed in the knowledge of

religious truths, principled from their infancy in the love of virtue and Godlineſs, and in an abhorrence of vice and irreligion, will be very ſenſible of the great advantages flowing from ſuch a pious education; as alſo, that when they come to be heads of families, as many of them do, they will impreſs upon the minds of their children and ſervants, out of love to them and gratitude to their benefactors the ſame truths, affections, and rules of life, which they conſider as the foundation both of their preſent and future happineſs; and theſe ſo taught inſtruct others, and theſe, a third generation, and ſo on to the end of the world. And if we allow a virtuous example to be in any degree influential, then others not immediately under their care may be induced to copy after them through all ſucceeding ages. He, that ſhall ſeriouſly attend to this way of reaſoning, will find it impoſſible to ſet any bounds to the ſpreading benefits of ſuch an early and preventing education.

HAVING thus ſhewn the nature and excellency of the duties here enjoined by our bleſſed Saviour, eſpecially when exerciſed in the promotion

motion of ſuch Charities, as I have been recommending; it remains, that we here conſider the obligations and motives to the performance of theſe duties, intimated in thoſe words: In as much as ye have done it to the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me: And conſequently, as our Saviour adds afterwards, In as much as ye did it not to them, ye did it not to me. Now the juſtice of this procedure muſt be founded upon ſome good reaſons in the very nature of the thing, and theſe ſeem to me to be thoſe, which follow:

FIRST.—He, that refuſes to pay a juſt debt, or to reſtore a thing depoſited with him, to the order of that perſon, to whom the one is due, or the other belongs; in effect refuſes to pay or reſtore them to himſelf, who may therefore juſtly reſent the indignity, as offered to himſelf. Now this is exactly the caſe of the uncharitable with reſpect to God. He hath given the earth to the children of men, yet not without a reſerve of diſpoſing of what portion of it, to whom and in what manner, he pleaſes. For this reaſon, as I obſerved before, we are taught in the Goſpel to look upon ourſelves, not as

abſolute Proprietors, but only as Stewards of the manifold gifts of God; Stewards, that are to give his Servants their meat in due ſeaſon.— Amongſt theſe the poor, doubtleſs, deſerve our firſt notice. For the very deſign of Providence, in the unequal diſtribution of the good things of this world, was; that the abundance of ſome ſhould be a ſupplement to the want of others; that they, that had much ſhould have nothing over, and they, that had little, ſhould have no lack. And for this reaſon, the poor are never to ceaſe out of the land; that we may never want opportunities of recognizing God's ſupreme right in our poſſeſſions, nor proper objects to exerciſe our Charity upon. Theſe, therefore, we are to conſider, not only as our brethren, but alſo as his receivers; eſpecially ſuch of them as have not reduced themſelves to indigence by any folly or extravagance of their own. And you all know, that no charge of this kind can affect thoſe, whoſe cauſe we are now pleading. Theſe ſeeming defects of providence then, as ſome think them, are to be filled up by every one of us in proportion to the wealth we enjoy. And if they be not, it will be in us, not in Providence, that the deficiency will

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be found. And woe be unto them, in whom it is found. For againſt them that dreadful charge will lie; and upon them that more dreadful ſentence will be paſſed. They were hungry and ye gave them no meat; thirſty, and ye gave them no drink; naked, and ye clothed them not, ſtrangers, and ye took them not in: Depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.—Nor let ſuch, as diſſipate in vain and unneceſſary, not to ſay ſinful, expences in a few days more, than the cravings of the indigent could ever draw from them, think; that the pretence of inability will ſcreen them from the juſt vengeance of God, when they ſhall be judged according to the tenor of this Goſpel.

THUS you have ſeen, that the poor do claim under God, and have a natural right, to a ſupply of their real wants from all that are of ability, antecedent and ſuperior to all human inſtitutions. And, therefore, in ſuch circumſtances to with-hold the neceſſary relief from them is a manifeſt injury to the poor, and a complicated ſin of injuſtice, ingratitude and diſobedience againſt God; as will more fully

appear

appear hereafter. And, doubtleſs, he will reſent ſuch injurious treatment in his ſtewards, and by parity of reaſon highly approve and greatly reward a contrary behaviour.

SECONDLY.—To do that, which is pleaſing to any perſon, purely out of love to him, though not immediately to himſelf, every generous man will acknowledge to be an obligation laid upon himſelf. And thus the matter ſtands betwixt God and us, with reſpect to thoſe good deeds, we do to the poor out of a true principle of Charity, that is, a ſincere love of God and man; for theſe he will regard as done to himſelf: And, therefore, St. Paul hath aſſured us, that God is not unrighteous, to forget our good works and labour, that proceedeth of love, which love we have ſhewn for his name's ſake, who have miniſtered to the Saints, and do miniſter. On the other hand, if the want of Charity to the poor be a demonſtration of the want of love to God himſelf, then it will be juſt in him to puniſh the offence, as if himſelf had been the object. Now there is ſo cloſe a connexion between the love of God and our neighbour, that where the love of the latter is not, there

there the love of the former will not be. For how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen, who loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen? The impoſſibility will appear from the very nature of this affection. For love always produces a compliance with the will, and a conformity to the temper, diſpoſitions and actions of the beloved. But neither of theſe will be found in the uncharitable. Not the firſt.—For there is no duty more frequently enjoined in Holy Scripture, than that of Charity.

THE firſt and great commandment in the law is, (Matth xxii. 37—40.) Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and ſoul and mind and ſtrength; and the ſecond is like, namely this, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. There is none other commandment greater than theſe; on theſe hang all the law and the prophets, and the performance of them is more than all whole burnt offerings and ſacrifices. In theſe commandments all acts of Charity are enjoined.

THE particular injunctions of the duty, which I am now recommending, that of miniſtering

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to the neceſſities of the poor, are almoſt numberleſs (Prov. iii. 9.) Honour the Lord with thy ſubſtance: (Eccles. xi. 1.) Caſt thy bread upon the waters: (Luke xi. 41.) Give alms of ſuch things, as ye have: (Heb. xiii. 16.) To do good and to communicate, forget not: (1ſt. Cor. xvi. 2.) Let every one lay by him in ſtore as God hath proſpered him: (2d. Cor. ix. 6.) He, which ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly, and he, which ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap bountifully; let every man do according as he is diſpoſed in his heart, not grudgingly or of neceſſity; for God loveth a chearful giver. (1 Tim. vi. 17, 19.) Charge them who are rich in this world, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come; that they may lay hold on eternal life. Theſe injunctions the uncharitable diſobeys; and, therefore, the love of God is not in him. Obedience is the ſureſt teſt of love: (John xv. 14.) For then, ſaith our Lord, are ye my friends, when ye do whatſoever I command you. And again, (John xiv. 15.) If ye love me, keep my commandments. How juſtly

then

then may we turn that queſtion of the beloved Apoſtle into a negation, and ſay, that he, who hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his compaſſion from him, can never have the love of God dwelling in him? And if uncharitableneſs to men proceeds from a want of love to God, then it will be moſt juſt in him to ſay, In as much as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye did it not to me. Another property of love is this, that it always worketh in the perſon loving a conformity to the object. If, therefore, we truly love God, we ſhall certainly imitate his example. Now God is an exuberant fountain of never failing goodneſs, being infinitely happy in himſelf, he created, that he might communicate; and as he hath multiplied his productions into that variety, in which we now ſee them, only to multiply the ſtreams of his goodneſs, ſo he continues them in being to perpetuate the current. He is the Father of the fatherleſs, he feedeth the hungry. And when the bleſſed Son of God took our nature upon him, he went about doing good to the bodies and ſouls of men; an equal mixture of divine power and mercy being viſible in all his

actions. And it is the language of his love, that we, according to our ſeveral abilities, ſhould follow his example. Shall we not then conclude, that where the natural properties of love are not, there the affection itſelf cannot be, and, therefore, that they do not love him, who do not love thoſe, whom he ſo dearly loves.— And that he may with ſtrict truth and juſtice, ſay, In as much as ye did it not to the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye did it not to me. Hear what our Lord hath ſaid upon other occaſions, but much to the ſame purpoſe: Whoſoever receiveth one ſuch little child in my name, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that ſent me; (Matth. x. 42.) and whoſoever ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a Diſciple, or becauſe he belongs to Chriſt, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward.

But the peculiar reaſon for this procedure muſt be drawn from the very name of brethren, by which he deſcribes theſe little ones, whom he points out to us as the proper objects of our Charity. By creation we have all one heavenly Father,

Father, and by generation we are all deſcended from one common Father on earth, and are, therefore, brethren by nature. By adoption alſo we are all children of God, and conſequently brethren by Grace; and by the incarnation of the Son of God, he became a brother to us, and conſequently we all are brethren to him, and to each other in him. And, therefore, when we are deficient in our duty to our brethren, we are ſo to his brethren alſo. Now every man will take in good part the kindneſs ſhewn to a brother, and reſent a contrary treatment of him accordingly. The want of Charity to the poor is a ſort of diſclaimer of all thoſe relations, which we bear to God, to our Redeemer, and to each other. No wonder then, that our Redeemer, who will then be our judge, ſhall ſay to the Uncharitable in that great and terrible day: In as much as ye did it not to the leaſt of theſe my brethren and your brethren, ye did it not to me, and contrariwiſe, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

I might now proceed to obſerve to you, that an uncharitable temper implies a diſbelief of the

promiſes of God, and conſequently of his being, which is a moſt provoking impiety. I might alſo enlarge upon the bleſſings annexed to the many injunctions of this duty, for ſcarce is there one to be met with, that hath not ſome promiſed reward annexed, ſome bleſſing pertaining either to this life or that which is to come.—But all arguments cannot be urged at one time, and I hope, that, with reſpect to you, they need not. I ſhall, therefore, only deſire you to remember, that one of the two ſentences mentioned in the context will certainly be paſſed upon you: Either, come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; or, depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, for theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal.

To conclude, you have here recommended to you the moſt proper objects for the exerciſe of your Charity, not that it is to be confined to them only. This your Charity is in ſome ſort comprehenſive of almoſt every kind of Charity, extends its influence both to body and ſoul; not

not only removes the wants of the indigent for the preſent, but contributes greatly to prevent their return.—You are bound in duty, gratitude, and I may add, in point of intereſt too, to be Charitable, for the benefits thereof are vaſtly diffuſive, and will return to you again —The voice of nature and revelation call upon you; and if you do not hearken to this voice, you diſobey the commands, diſregard or diſbelieve the promiſes and threatenings of the Almighty; and are incapable of being wrought upon by the glorious example of your Creator and Redeemer; and conſequently do not love them as you ought, you diſclaim the moſt endearing relations, if you are deficient in theſe labours of love, and will hereafter be condemned by your own conſciences; and alſo by the juſt ſentence of him, that laid down his life to ſave you from everlaſting death.

Be exhorted, therefore, to lay up for yourſelves treaſures in Heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt corrupteth; and where thieves do not break through and ſteal; to make to yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that, when ye fail, may receive you into everlaſting habitations,

habitations. And you, that have hitherto liberally extended your Charity to theſe little ones, be not ye weary in welldoing, for in due ſeaſon ye ſhall ſurely reap, if ye faint not.—(Heb. vi. 10.) For God is not unrighteous, that he will forget your work and labour, that proceedeth of love, which love ye have ſhewed towards his name—to whom be rendered and aſcribed Dominion and Majeſty, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for ever—*Amen*.

SERMON III.

SERMON III.

Eccles. xii. *ver.* 1.—*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no Pleaſure in them.*

TO remember is not only to know habitually, but alſo often actually to think upon that which we knew before. To remember our Creator therefore ſuppoſes, firſt, that we have diligently enquired after God, and the relation he bears to us, and the duties that flow from that relation; and then ſecondly, that we keep up in our minds a conſtant ſenſe of theſe things by frequent recollection: This is the moſt proper ſenſe of the words remember thy

Creator;

Creator; but here they imply ſomewhat more, this knowledge and recollection being uſeleſs, where they do not produce ſome good effect; and therefore words of knowledge and memory do often comprehend in ſacred as in other writings their natural effects and ends: Remember thy Creator then is as much as to ſay, endeavour to acquire a true knowledge of his nature and of the ralation he bears to thee, and of the duties that flow from that relation; ſet him always before thine eyes, love, reverence, ſerve, obey and worſhip him with all thy heart and ſoul and might at all times, and in all places: Conſider him as the gracious Being, that gave thee life and all other bleſſings; that thou art his property, to be diſpoſed of, as he thinks fit; and therefore art in duty bound to ſubmit with patience to his diſpenſations, to love him as the author of all thy capacities of happineſs, and of the continuance and gratification of them by a ſupply of ſuitable objects; ſince none but he, that created all things, can, and doth preſerve both thee and them: Conſider, that as he brought thee out of nothing, ſo he can deſtroy thee with a word; that as he made thee capable of happineſs, ſo he can make thoſe very capacities of happineſs,

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the avenues to pain. Above all things therefore take care, thou doſt not make thyſelf the object of his diſpleaſure. Conſider that he is a Being of infinite veracity and juſtice; and therefore will moſt ſurely make good his promiſes in rewarding the obedient with everlaſting life and happineſs, and his threatenings in the puniſhment of the wicked and diſobedient with everlaſting death and miſery: Conſider that as he is a God of wiſdom, he muſt have created thee for ſome good end; purſue that end by living up to thoſe rules he hath preſcribed: This is properly to remember our Creator, and this we are adviſed to do, as ſoon as we are in a capacity of knowing and doing his will; For the *wiſe* man ſaith not, Remember thy Creator at ſome diſtant time, but now; not, when thou art ſick or old, when the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, in which thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them; not when thine eyes are dim, and thy faculties weak; when paleneſs and languiſhing come upon thee; not when thine underſtanding, memory, and judgment are decayed; when thou ſhalt be no longer able to ſin, nor have any pleaſure in the gratifications of thy luſts; not when there is no virtue in obedience, becauſe there is not

any temptation to tranſgreſs; not when thou canſt neither ſerve God nor Mammon; not when thy life is juſt expiring, and the time of probation drawing to an end; but now in the days of thy youth as ſoon as thou art capable of ſerving him, now that thou art in health and liberty.

FROM the words thus explained, it appears, that God requires an early piety and obedience from us, and that it is our duty as well as wiſdom to be religious betimes; and this is the doctrine, which I ſhall at this time endeavour to recommend by the ſeveral arguments following:

FIRST.—By ſhewing that it is moſt juſt in God to exact an early obedience from us. And,

SECONDLY.—That it is moſt eaſy, ſafe, acceptable to God, and profitable for us, to pay ſuch an early obedience.

AND, firſt, I am to ſhew that it is moſt juſt in God to require an early obedience from us. God hath a juſt right to the obedience of our whole life, and, therefore, certainly of that part of it, wherein the ſenſe of the benefit of exiſtence

ence is or ought to be freſh upon our memories. It is high ingratitude to be unmindful of a benefit, almoſt as ſoon as it is received, an unexpected and unmerited favour naturally puts a man upon enquiring after his benefactor, that he may take care to make his acknowledgments to him, and above all things avoid offending him. When, therefore, our reaſon begins to open and to preſent to us this world, furniſhed with all things neceſſary to our ſubſiſtence and delight; when it is further revealed to us, that this world is but a deſert in compariſon of thoſe eternal manſions that are prepared in Heaven for us. In ſuch circumſtances may it not reaſonably be expected, that we ſhould enquire, who it is, that hath done ſo great things for us; how we ſhall make ſuitable returns to him; what obligations he hath laid upon us, and how he would have us to exerciſe the faculties which he gave, that we may not be wanting in gratitude to, nor forfeit our intereſt in the love and favour of that God, who created us from a principle of pure benevolence? Should the powers, which God hath given us for the advancement of his own glory, be employed in his diſhonour, as ſoon as they begin to act? This would be monſtrous

ingratitude. And this was the reaſon that God commanded the Jews to be ſo very diligent in the information of their children, concerning the meaning of thoſe ſacrifices, cuſtoms and ceremonies, which were inſtituted by him, as memorials of his favours to that people Thus you ſee, that the juſt right, which God hath to our obedience, is peculiarly ſtrengthened and ſet home upon youth by the freſhneſs of the benefit received. There is indeed greater iniquity in the ſins of thoſe of riper judgments; but there is a greater natural deformity in the ſame ſins, when found in childhood and youth. The laws of God, which are juſt and righteous, equally extends their obligation to perſons of all ages; youth can no more plead an exemption from duty and obedience than thoſe of riper age.

But, Secondly, as we are bound to ſerve God from our infancy and the firſt dawnings of reaſon, ſo it is more eaſy to learn habits of virtue at that age, than afterwards. It is eaſy to pluck up the noxious plant, at its firſt appearance above the ſurface of the earth; but give it time to ſhoot its branches upwards, and its root downwards, and it will cumber the ground,

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draw away nouriſhment from better and more uſeful products of the earth, and require much more labour and pains to root it up: In like manner, if the mind of man be not ſubdued by early cultivation, it will ſoon be overgrown with vice; which, if ſuffered to take root by a careleſs remiſſion in our younger years, will increaſe and gather ſtrength in proportion to the time of its growth; and if neglected for a conſiderable time, is not to be plucked out, but as our right eye, or torn away, but as our right hand: There is no remedy like prevention. Such as is the power of vice, ſuch alſo is that of virtue: It will gain an eaſy admiſſion into the ſoul, if vice have not been before hand with it, and it will ſtrongly hold out againſt temptation, if it hath had ſufficient time to fortify itſelf. The longer any duty is deferred the harder it is to be performed and delighted in. Vices grow imperious by indulgence and evil habits acquire the force of a ſecond nature. If ever, therefore, you deſign to be religious at all, it is the eaſieſt way to begin to remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

AGAIN,

AGAIN, as we are in duty bound to pay obedience to the laws of God, as ſoon as we are arrived at the capacity of ſo doing, and as it is the eaſieſt, ſo it is the ſafeſt way, to be good and virtuous betimes. Life is uncertain:—Whilſt we delay to do our duty, and work out our ſalvation, the night may come upon us, wherein no man can work. He that hath no aſſurance of the future, ſhould make good uſe of the preſent moment, eſpecially when matters of infinite conſequence depend upon it; but who can tell, what a day, an hour, or a moment may bring forth? He that defers his repentance for the preſent, though it were but for one day, walks upon a precipice, ſtands upon uncertainties, and leaves his eternal happineſs or miſery upon a chance; and, therefore, until we can ſecure the foundation of our hopes, the time we fix upon for the work of repentance and the buſineſs of religion, it is unparalleled indiſcretion to put it off.

THE wiſdom of God will not ſuffer us to know how long we have to live, that we may be employed in his ſervice from the beginning to the end of life. There was as much prudence

dence as affection in the advice, that Michael gave to David: Save thyſelf this night, to-morrow thou mayeſt be ſlain: The argument is ſtronger in the preſent caſe, Remember thy Creator to-day, to-morrow it may be too late; work out thy ſalvation to-day, to-morrow thou mayeſt periſh everlaſtingly. If death prevent the execution of our good purpoſes, in what a wretched caſe are we? In death, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, no man remembereth thee, O Lord! and who ſhall give thee thanks in the pit? Whatever, therefore, thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, ſaith the wiſe King; for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge nor wiſdom, in the grave, whither thou art going; and who is that wiſe Prophet that can tell, how ſoon he ſhall be at his journey's end?

If our lives are not extended to the period we have fixed upon for the beginning of our reformation, our lives and hopes periſh together; all opportunities of doing our duty are for ever paſt; let that, therefore, be done now, which hereafter cannot be done at all, or at leaſt not as it ought to be. Let none of us imitate the imprudence of that Athenian, who, when letters

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of a conſpiracy againſt his life were brought him at night, as he was making merry with his friends, put them into his boſom, ſaying, Let us leave ſerious thoughts to the morrow: I ſay, let none of us imitate his example, leſt our fate alſo be like his, and the morrow and the ſerious thoughts be both precluded:—But ſuppoſe they ſhould not, yet ſtill it is more ſafe to begin to be religious betimes; for, perhaps, when that time comes, on which we purpoſe to begin, we may have leſs inclination to virtue and more to vice, than heretofore, and this is indeed the common event in ſuch caſes. Sin (as was before obſerved) confirms its tenure by continuance of poſſeſſion. The motives to a ſinful procraſtination may be ſtronger hereafter, than now they are: But if they ſhould not, what claim have we to the aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit of God, which we have ſo long preſumptuouſly rejected? Every good and perfect giſt cometh from above: Repentance is one of theſe, and it is but with a peradventure, that a man who hath for a long time rejected that grace, may expect to have it given him; if peradventure, ſaith St. Paul, God will give them repentance. We have heard of ſome who might hear

hear and not perceive; and ſee, yet not underſtand, whom God had given up to a reprobate mind, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs; becauſe they loved not to retain God in their thoughts, according to the knowledge they had of him. And why may not this be the fate of thoſe, that have thus reſolved not to liſten to the voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely? If we will not hear the voice of God, in mercy calling us to repentance now, we ſhall perhaps too ſoon feel his hand heavy upon us in judgment. Let us then beware, leſt our Saviour's lamentation over Jeruſalem ſhould be too applicable to any of us: How often would I, when ye would not; behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate. If thou hadſt known in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. Hear what the wiſe King hath ſaid, (Prov. chap. i. ver. 24, &c.) "Becauſe I called and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hands and no man regarded; ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock, when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction as a whirl-

wind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh come upon you: Then ſhall ye call on me, but I will not anſwer: they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me; for that they hated knowledge and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord: Therefore, they ſhall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices; for the turning away of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them." And who can tell, that the next ſinful act or profane neglect ſhall not work this dreadful effect, or that indeed his wilful or preſumptuous ſins have not already wrought it? Who can ſay, what offence will provoke the Almighty to ſhut up his loving kindneſs in everlaſting diſpleaſure, and make him ceaſe to be any more intreated? How ſoon it may come to this, "Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone." What can be more preſumptuous than to preſcribe to the operation of divine grace? Who can tell how long God's patience will endure, or calculate his long ſuffering to a day? Who can know when God will put a final ſeparation betwixt his mercy and the preſumptuous offender? Patience abuſed often awakes in open vengeance Therefore, until we can ſecure the time we look for, and the grace we ſtand in need of,

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let us remember now our Creator, ſeek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. (Iſai. LV. 6.)

AND here we may make a further conceſſion, and ſuppoſe the preſumptuous offender, that delays his repentance for the preſent, to live to the time appointed for the commencement of his repentance and reformation; and that he not only endeavours, but continues to endeavour, to bring that neceſſary work to perfection, which I fear but ſeldom happens: Yet ſtill the memory of his former folly and wickedneſs, will be attended with many bitter reflections, fill his mind with anxious fears, and caſt a damp upon thoſe hopes, which are the beſt ſupport of the ſpirit of a man under the apprehenſions of approaching death and judgment.

FURTHER yet, as God has a juſt right to an early obedience from us, as it is the eaſieſt and ſafeſt way of working out our ſalvation to begin the work betimes; ſo it is the moſt acceptable unto God and profitable for us. Under the law the firſt fruits of all their increaſe were God's property: They were firſt to ſerve him,

and then themſelves: No imperfect victim was to be offered, the lame and the blind were an abomination: Even ſo it is under the Goſpel diſpenſation, we are to dedicate unto God the firſt fruits of reaſon, to honour him with the firſt capacity of obedience; we are not to think, that the lame and the blind ſervices of ſickneſs and age are all, that he expects from us. There is leſs liberty and conſequently leſs merit, if I may uſe that word, in our actions, when the hand of the Almighty lies heavy in correction upon us, when the decays of nature put us in mind of our Creator, and of the days of darkneſs, whether we will or no, than in the time of youth and health. There is little virtue in leaving our luſts, when they have almoſt, if not altogether, left us, of their own accord.

THERE can be but little virtue, where there is but little or no temptation. The nearer we are to the dregs of life, the leſs of energy and ſpirit there is in our actions. What is it leſs than downright mockery to ſay unto God, Lord, now the world leaves me, I come to thee? My ſtrength is not ſufficient for the buſineſs or pleaſures of this life; the ſervice of ſin requires

ſtronger

ſtronger ſenſes, keener appetites, more vigorous and active powers; take thou the dead reſidue; offer on this wiſe to thy Governor and ſee how he will accept thee?

We are wont to make great allowances for defects, cauſed by infirmity or age; but it would be ſtrange preſumption to expect acceptance of our ſervices, which we never made a tender of, until they were rather troubleſome than uſeful. When youth and ſtrength are ſpent and gone, the buſineſs of religion is in great meaſure contracted, and the opportunities of the performance of many neceſſary duties overpaſt. It is true indeed, God is graciouſly pleaſed to forgive the ſins both of omiſſion and commiſſion, upon a true repentance; but then this grace depends not altogether upon ourſelves, nor is to be obtained juſt at our own determination: But ſuppoſe it were, yet no doubt it is more pleaſing to the Almighty, that we ſhould have always retained our integrity, than be ſorry that we have not; and have lived in conſtant ſubjection to our heavenly Father, than have ſallied out for a time and conſumed his ſubſtance with riotous living, though we ſhould afterwards

wards return, as the prodigal ſon did. There is ſomething more comfortable in that declaration of the Father to his ever obedient Son, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine, than the killing of the fatted calf to welcome the other's return implies. Is it not more acceptable unto God think you, that we ſhould have ſerved him faithfully all our life long, than have miſpent the greateſt part of it in the diſhonour of God, and in working out our own ſhame? It requires extraordinary care and diligence indeed, in our after obedience to make reparation for former diſobedience.

It is a Chriſtian's honour, no leſs than his duty to imitate his great Maſter, by growing as in ſtature, ſo in wiſdom and in favour, both with God and man: And this brings me next to ſhew, that as an early piety is moſt acceptable unto God, ſo it is moſt advantageous to ourſelves. For the approbation and favour of God, and the happineſs of man are inſeparable. He that begins to be good betimes, prevents many deſtructive vices, that caſt a blot upon a man's reputation, hurt the body, afflict the ſoul, and lay waſte the conſcience. He avoids all the trou-

ble,

ble, that is required to unlearn vice: On the contrary, he gains a good reputation, which makes his perſon beloved and his dictates revered; he gains alſo abundance of inward peace and joy, which will be to him bread to eat which no man knows of nor can, but by the ſame methods; a more ſolid and ſubſtantial ſatisfaction, than can be hoped for from the largeſt doſe of temporal enjoyments; a cordial of rich ingredients to ſupport him under the terrors of death and apprehenſions of judgment, there being no ſuch ſupport in death, as the recollection of a well ſpent life: In a word an early obedience makes the yoke of religion eaſy; life pleaſant, and death, if not deſired, yet not dreaded. It renders a man beloved, whilſt he lives, lamented when he dies, and remembered with eſteem and approbation after death; and what is more than all theſe, God will hereafter be his exceeding great reward.

Are you willing then, that God ſhould receive his juſt right from you? Would you take the eaſieſt, the ſafeſt road to Heaven and Happineſs? Would you do that ſervice to God, which is moſt acceptable to him, and moſt beneficial to yourſelves? If ſo, you muſt by an early

early piety remember now your Creator in the days of your youth and ſtrength, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which you will ſay, we have no pleaſure in them, and God will ſay, I have no pleaſure in your too late tenders of obedience, in your dead devotions and conſtrained ſubmiſſions, the refuſe of ſin and luſt, and the ſcorn even of the tempter himſelf.

It is but too late to think of going to labour in the vineyard, when we ſhould be receiving the penny; too late to think of ſowing the ſeed, when we ſhould be reaping the harveſt. Ye then that have hitherto miſpent your precious time, if any ſuch there be, conſider what fruit ye had in thoſe things, whereof ye either now are or hereafter will be aſhamed, and for which, without a timely repentance, ye are ſure to be brought to a ſevere account; and let the patience and long-ſuffering of God lead you to repentance, that ye may be found of him in Peace, when he ſhall judge the world by Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord—to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be aſcribed all Power, Dominion and Majeſty, now and for ever.—*Amen.*

SERMON IV.

SERMON IV.

Pſalm xc. *ver.* 12.—*So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom.*

THE Title of this Pſalm, viz. The Prayer of Moſes, declares the Author; and the ſentence denounced againſt the murmuring Iſraelites numb. the 14th points out the occaſion. "Say unto them, as truly as I live, ſaith the Lord, as ye have ſpoken in mine ears, ſo will I do to you. Your carcaſes ſhall fall in this wilderneſs, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured againſt me." Moſes therefore wrote this Pſalm, that the people being daily put in mind of the

ſhortneſs and uncertainty of life, and the heavy wrath of God againſt ſuch, as do ungratefully ſin againſt him, might reflect upon the cauſes of the evils, they ſuffered, and conſider the proper remedies for them; and by that means apply their hearts unto wiſdom, living in the conſtant fear of God, and in uniform obedience to his commands.

The whole Pſalm is wiſely calculated to promote all theſe good purpoſes. In the firſt verſe, are ſet forth the infinite power and univerſal providence of God, Lord thou haſt been our dwelling place in all generations. In the ſecond and fourth his eternity, Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadſt formed the earth and the world, even from everlaſting to everlaſting, thou art God. In the eighth his omniſcience, Thou haſt ſet our iniquities before thee, our ſecret ſins in the light of thy countenance: And in all the reſt to the eleventh, the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of human life, and the dreadful effects of God's wrath againſt ſinners: Thou turneſt man to deſtruction, and ſayeſt, return ye children of men: Thou carrieſt them away as with a flood: They are like graſs,

which

which in the morning flouriſheth and groweth up, but in the evening is cut down and withereth; for we are conſumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled. Who knows the power of thine anger, or the terror of thine indignation? And then in the text with a proper devotion, ſuch as theſe meditations would naturally ſuggeſt, follows this pious prayer: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom."

If this was a proper petition in thoſe days, it is not leſs ſo in ours: Our lives are as ſhort and uncertain, and I wiſh I could ſay, they were not alſo as corrupt, as theirs; that we were not as unmindful of the infinite power, knowledge, juſtice, and univerſal providence of God, of his hatred againſt ſin, and of the terrors of his indignation; that we were not too apt, after their example, to diſtruſt his goodneſs, and to murmur againſt his providence. Let us, therefore, ſo learn to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom; for otherwiſe, as God had ſworn, that the murmuring and rebellious Iſraelites ſhould not enter into his reſt the promiſed land here on earth, ſo neither may we expect to enter into his eternal reſt hereafter.

To this end let us conſider what it is, that Moſes prayed for in behalf of himſelf and the people under his care: And what that wiſdom is, to which he wiſhed them to apply their hearts.

And, Firſt, it was not the deſign of the pious Author of this Pſalm to pray, that God would reveal to him and his people the preciſe time of their departure hence. This kind of curioſity was condemned even by the Heathen Moraliſts, as being not leſs wicked, than it is vain. But if it were poſſible to find out the ſecret; yet it would be far better, that it ſhould lie concealed.

The deſign of God in concealing the time of our departure hence, is wiſe and good, viz. To intimate to us, that he expects from us the ſervice and obedience of our whole lives. It is for this very end and purpoſe, that he hath alſo preſcribed duties proper to every age and condition of life, that we might thankfully improve and employ the time and talents, he affords us, with conſtant watchfulneſs and perſeverance; waiting for the coming of our Lord with oil in our lamps and our lights burning, (i. e.) with

good

good inward diſpoſitions, and outward virtuous, and uſeful actions; and bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing. But ſome, perhaps, may ſay, that to their imagination it ſhould ſeem to be an act of great mercy and goodneſs in God to give us more early and certain notice of his coming, than a ſhort diſeaſe (the event of which is for the moſt part doubtful) can give, concluding, that men would certainly be very diligent in preparing themſelves againſt the time they knew, they ſhould be called out of this ſtate of probation. The language of this ſuggeſtion plainly ſhews, that they, who make it, would fain ſatisfy the demands of duty by a late or death-bed repentance. They would be content to offer unto God the ſervice of a few days or months, at the end of life, provided they might ſacrifice the reſt of it to their own luſts and ſecular intereſts, as if Heaven and future happineſs were worth but little pains; and God, who gave them all the time of life, deſerved, that but little of it ſhould be dedicated to his honour in return. But, ſurely, after a whole life ſpent in the commiſſion of ſin and omiſſion of duty, it is not ſo eaſy a thing to repent, as ſome may have imagined.

imagined. Evil actions do naturally grow into habits, and theſe do always beget a love of vice and diſlike to virtue; but every one knows, that it is no eaſy taſk ſo to change the bent of the mind on a ſudden, that it ſhall hate what juſt before it delighted in, and delight in what it hated.—And yet, without ſuch a change there can be no true repentance.

Some mens' fears do oft impoſe upon their judgments, which fears, by a fatal error, they are apt to conſider, as the effect of a true contrition. How often have we ſeen perſons ſeemingly ſincere, making ſtrong vows of repentance and reformation in time of ſickneſs, who, notwithſtanding, upon their recovery have left their holy vows and purpoſes in the ſame place, where their diſeaſe, pains, or fears left them? No man of common prudence would dare to truſt his own ſincerity in ſuch a caſe. His fear might increaſe upon him, as the apprehenſions of death grew ſtronger, and yet his love of his ſins and averſion to his duty remain; and then he is no true penitent. Nothing leſs than a thorough change of mind and manners will conſtitute that penitential holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.

The only true teſt of a ſincere repentance is a tried obedience. And, therefore, God will not ſuffer us to know, how many days, or how few we have to live; to that end that we may work the works of him, that ſent us into the world, before the night cometh, wherein no man can work; that by the conſtant habitual performance of our duty, we may be aſſured, we have overcome our luſts, the world and the wicked one; and ſo form a true notion of the ſtate of our ſouls, without which we could not have a well-grounded confidence of finding mercy with God at the laſt day. Again, if men, knowing the hour of death to be at a diſtance, were thereby induced to defer their repentance, as it is but too probable they would be, God's juſt expectations would be defeated; and ſuch is the deceitfulneſs of ſin, they would be in danger of being blinded and hardened by it. This very circumſtance of their ſins would be an aggravation of their guilt, and make them more criminal, than the ſame ſins committed through the power of a preſent temptation only. He that delays his repentance to a future time, muſt proceed upon a ſuppoſition, that it is in every ones power to repent, when he pleaſes:

But

But where have we learned this doctrine? What is man, that he ſhould preſume to preſcribe to the grace of God, when it ſhall co-operate with him; without which all his endeavours after repentance will be ineffectual and vain. There may be a time for ought we know, even in this life, when God will be no more intreated.—Have you not read of one, who found no place for repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears? Good, therefore, is the advice of the Prophet: Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; and that of the Pſalmiſt, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Besides what hath been already ſaid, we have other arguments to prove, that God conceals from us the time of our diſſolution in mercy to us. How would it freeze our ſpirits to ſee the fatal day approaching? How ſhould we anticipate the ſorrow of being bereft of our deareſt friends or relations? The pain of apprehenſion in all ſuch caſes would be more intolerable, than the affliction when it came. Foreknowledge is the prerogative of Heaven; and is withheld from man for the peace of his own mind.

mind. As on the one hand we ſee men ſin on boldly, though they know not, but that this night their ſouls may be required; and may preſume, that they would be much more daring in impiety, if they knew, aſſuredly, that they had a leaſe of life for ſixty or ſeventy years to come; ſo on the other hand, if men were ſure to die young, the terrors of its approach would, in a great meaſure, deſtroy the freedom and merit of their actions. When, therefore, Moſes prays, that God would teach him and his people ſo to number their days, that they might apply their hearts unto wiſdom; one thing implied in that petition is this, that God would work in their hearts a lively and affecting ſenſe of the uncertainty of human life; and the wiſdom, which he would have them learn from that conſideration is that, which our bleſſed Saviour has ſo well expreſſed, (Matt. xxiv. 44.) and which we ought always to be attentive to, viz. "Therefore be ye alſo ready; for in ſuch an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh."

But, Secondly, that which may be numbered muſt be finite; for that which is infinite goes beyond the power of numbers; and, there-

fore, though we know not how long our days ſhall laſt, yet we are ſure that they muſt have an end. We, mortal creatures, are maſters only of a moment: The paſt we cannot recall, the future we cannot enſure. Since then the number of our days is finite, but duration infinite; ſince we are ſure, that how long ſoever we remain here, there is eternity ſtill behind, and that how much ſoever of that, which we call time, is added on this ſide the grave, it takes nothing from eternity; it is our higheſt prudence to conſider, what will become of us in a future, eternal ſtate. If we are to be reduced to nothing, or to lie for ever in a ſtate of inſenſibility; then the Epicurean maxim will be a good rule for us to follow: Let us eat and drink, (i. e.) Let us make the moſt of our preſent exiſtence, for to-morrow we die. If death will make a final end of us, let us not torture ourſelves with hopes and fears about matters, that lie beyond the grave. But if we have an immortal principle within us, that muſt ſurvive in happineſs or miſery, (a ſtate of indifference being inconſiſtent with its nature;) if we are alſo aſſured, that the body muſt be raiſed and united to the ſoul to undergo the ſame fate with it to all eternity;

then

then it will be our greateſt wiſdom to ſecure thoſe our future concerns; for what are temporal uneaſineſſes to eternal torments? and what are worldly gains or ſenſual pleaſures in compariſon of the never ending felicities of glorified Saints?

MAN is a creature deſigned for two different conditions of exiſtence; the firſt ſhort and tranſient; the ſecond everlaſting. The great queſtion, in which we are all chiefly concerned, is this, in which of theſe two ſtates it is our higheſt intereſt to make ourſelves happy? Whether we ſhould endeavour to ſecure to ourſelves the pleaſures of a life, that is uncertain and precarious, and, at the longeſt, of a very inconſiderable duration; or of that, which is unalterable and endleſs. Every one, ſure, at the firſt hearing, knows which of theſe two deſerves the preference; and yet if we judge by the courſe of mens' actions, we may preſume too many make a moſt pernicious choice, providing for this life, as if it were never to have an end; and for that which is to come, as if it were never to have a beginning. It is impoſſible to produce an inſtance of a wider contra-

diction betwixt principle and practice, than a man perſuaded of theſe two different ſtates of exiſtence, or at leaſt pretending ſo to be, yet perpetually employed in making proviſion for a life of ſixty or ſeventy years, a good part of which is ſpent before he begins to make ſuch proviſion his purſuit; and at the ſame time neglecting to make any for that, which after myriads of ages will be ſtill new and ſtill beginning. If we were to live as many years, as there are ſtars in the firmament; and to be happy for ſo long a ſpace of time, on condition of being eternally miſerable afterwards, or miſerable ſo long to be for ever after happy; ſince what is future, though at ever ſo great a diſtance, will be preſent, and ſuch a number of years bears not the proportion to eternity, than one ſtar doth to the whole number, or, more properly ſpeaking, no proportion at all, it is eaſy to ſee, which is the wiſer choice. To bring on a future greater evil by ſhifting off a preſent one, is not wiſdom, but weakneſs, not prudence, but prodigality.

But the terms of Salvation are not ſo ſevere, as this Hypotheſis hath ſtated them. The choice propoſed

propoſed to us is, whether for an uncertain portion of time, ſhort at its utmoſt extent, we will gratify our ſinful luſts, and be for ever undone; or, for the ſame ſhort uncertain portion of time, lead a virtuous and religious courſe of life, (which, according to its natural tendency and general effect, makes us more happy in this world, than a contrary courſe of ſin) and for ſo doing receive an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. Upon this true ſtate of the caſe, the folly of a wrong choice is ſo very extravagant, that the recollection of it will make the very pains of Hell more pungent, than otherwiſe they would be. Every wiſe man, therefore, will regard this life only ſo far, as it may conduce to the happineſs of the next; and chearfully ſacrifice the ſinful pleaſures of a finite duration to thoſe rivers of pleaſure, that are to be found at God's right hand for evermore.

But, Thirdly, our days here on earth are not only finite, but few. We fade away ſuddenly like the graſs, and bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told. As ſoon, as we were born, we began to die. The full period of human

human life, as other things in proſpect, ſeems even long enough, and we fancy we ſhall have enough of life before we come to the end of it. But in retroſpect, how ſhort? When, being advanced into the neighbourhood of death, we caſt our eyes backward, the long interval, that lay between our infancy and age, appears but as a dream, a dream of a ſhadow, ſo ſoon paſſeth it away and we are gone. It is a good rule, therefore, to meaſure the ſubſequent time of life by that, which is already paſt; but the beſt way to form a juſt notion of it is to compare it with eternity. As the earth, when compared with the univerſe, dwindles into a mere point: So when the ſhort duration of this tranſitory life is compared with eternity, it ſhrinks into a moment: And this compariſon ſhould be the more frequently made; becauſe the grand competition in this life is betwixt time and eternity. An unlawful indulgence in the momentary pleaſures of this life (without the intervention of a true repentance) terminating in eternal ruin, as the obedience of this ſhort ſpan of exiſtence, will moſt certainly be rewarded with never ending felicity. He, therefore, that would rightly number his days, muſt conſider them not only

as

as finite, but few; and if he doth, his temptations will loſe much of their influence upon him.

The utmoſt we can propoſe to ourſelves by the commiſſion of any ſin, is only to procure to ourſelves ſome pleaſure or advantage, during our ſhort abode here on earth. But ſurely it is the folly even of fools to deſtroy the peace of our own minds, to forfeit the favour of God and everlaſting happineſs, and to incur the damnation of Hell, for any ſuch ſhort-lived pleaſure or advantage. If a life of fifty or ſixty years were a continued ſcene of unmixed and uninterrupted pleaſures; and yet, by the conſtitution both of men and things, it is impoſſible, but that there ſhould be many interruptions to our pleaſures, and bitter mixtures in them: Suppoſe, however, that it were otherwiſe; yet what a wretched happineſs is this, in compariſon of thoſe good things, which God hath prepared for thoſe, that love him; which neither eye hath ſeen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive; pleaſures, which neither admit of interruption nor alloy. What a poor recompence

pence for the gnawings of a wounded conſcience, or even for thoſe death-bed apprehenſions, when diſmal foretaſtes of the impending wrath of God ſhall fill the ſoul with horror and diſmay? What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul? He, that conſiders the tranſitory nature of all ſublunary things, will certainly leſſen his eſteem for them, and be naturally led to fix his affections upon the better and more enduring ſubſtance. Doubtleſs he is very unwiſe, that over-zealouſly affects ſuch things, as muſt ſhortly leave him, or be left by him. It would be the higheſt wiſdom to make that eſtimate of the tranſitory things of this life now, that we ſhall certainly make of them then, when we perceive the neceſſity of an immediate divorce; then ſhould we not miſpend ſo much of our precious time about them as we do. It is, therefore, a matter of great conſequence to every man, that he keep up in his mind a lively ſenſe of the ſhort extent of human life, which ſeldom fails to make a man moderate in his deſires, temperate in his enjoyments, humble in proſperity, and patient in adverſity. St. Paul's reaſoning upon this conſideration is extremely juſt: But this I ſay, Brethren,

thren; the time is ſhort; it remaineth therefore, that they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they, that uſe this world, as not abuſing it; for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away.

But, Fourthly, of thoſe few days, that are allotted us, part are already paſſed, and the remainder, as we obſerved before, is altogether uncertain. Death hath already ſeized upon a good part of our lives, and there is nothing but uncertainty behind. Let us not, therefore, make a falſe eſtimate, as if the whole were yet before us. The good Arithmetician will take that, which is paſt, out of the account, ſhorten his hopes proportionably, call off his affections from the things of this world, and fix them on things above.

To conclude, if we have hitherto faithfully diſcharged our duty, let us not be weary in well-doing, after we have borne the burden and heat of the day, and the time of receiving our wages is at hand. But if otherwiſe, if after ſo

many years' probation, we cannot ſhew wherein we have anſwered the ends of our Creation, promoted the honour of God or the welfare of our fellow-creatures, in what inſtance we have reſiſted and corrected the vicious propenſities of our corrupt nature; if our irregular paſſions and appetites be ſtill in a ſtate of anarchy and rebellion againſt the dictates of reaſon; if we be ſtill the ſame ſtrangers to temperance, ſobriety, charity, juſtice, humility, meekneſs or any other Chriſtian grace, as heretofore; if our Faith be yet wavering, and our hope but one remove from downright deſpair: If this be our caſe, we ought to double our diligence, conſidering, that we have now our work to begin in the evening of life, and muſt run the race, that is ſet before us, without intermediate breathings, having trifled away the beſt part of our time.—When the day is ſhort and the journey long, it is good to riſe early, "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt."

If God, through his great goodneſs and long ſuffering towards us, hath not cut us off in a condition,

condition, ſo unfit for death and judgment, as that in which we hitherto have been; it is the leaſt we can do in gratitude to him and compaſſion to ourſelves, to dedicate what remains to his ſervice and the care of our immortal ſouls; and it will be downright phrenſy not to ſecure our title to future happineſs, when we may do it, perhaps by working in the vineyard one hour of the day. It is a miſerable thing to be old in years, and yet but infants in Grace; or, which is worſe, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; to have the work of the whole day to do, when the night, in which no man can work. is juſt upon us. Every age and every relation hath a peculiar duty appertaining to it; and what kind of ſentiments, think you, will diſtract the ſoul of that man, who, when he reviews his paſt conduct, ſhall find all the duties of every age and relation neglected; in all which it is impoſſible for him to make proof of his obedience to the divine will, when once he hath paſſed that particular period of life, to which the duty belonged; and that relation, on which it was founded, is no more? And this is an intimation, that every one, who defers his repentance, would do well to conſider; at the

ſame time remembering, that nights and days very ſilently and ſwiftly ſucceed each other, and will be apt to carry him into an eternal ſtate, before he is aware; for though we may number what is paſt, yet that which is to come is in the hands of God. When the Worldling ſaith unto his ſoul, Soul, take thine eaſe, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, and ſo forth; that night, perhaps, his ſoul is required.

LET us, therefore, reſolve to put away our ſin by an immediate repentance; and let a thorough reformation be the buſineſs of that uncertain period of life, that is yet remaining: Then may we hope to look Death, that King of Terrors in the face without fear. Let us fight the good fight, finiſh our courſe, and keep the faith; then ſhall the arms of mercy be extended for our reception; then ſhall we receive the Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to all thoſe, that love his Appearing.—To whom be aſcribed Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for ever.—*Amen.*

SERMON V.

SERMON V.

Eph. iv. ver. 25 —Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.

IT may be admitted as a maxim, that Religion includes Morality; and, therefore, although a man may be unblameable in his morals, yet not a good Chriſtian: It is impoſſible for him to be a good Chriſtian, or a truly Religious man, without a ſincere practice of all moral virtues, and a juſt abhorrence of the contrary vices.

THOUGH a moral unbeliever ſhould not be, yet an immoral believer is, a contradiction in terms. In vain will that man hope for Salvation by the Goſpel, who diſregards the voice of nature, and

and acts contrary to the light of his own mind. And, for this reason, discourses upon moral virtues and vices, intended to recommend the former, and expose the latter, are not only useful, but necessary. Had we not this apology for our present undertaking, Falsehood and Lies are words of such an odious sound, and the vices denoted by them, of such a scandalous and malignant nature, that one would almost think an attempt to expose them below the dignity of this place, and a fitter subject for a pamphlet than a Sermon. But let none of us affect more wisdom than an inspired Apostle, nor think that precept an improper subject of discourse in a Christian assembly, which he hath thought necessary to insert in an epistle to a primitive Christian Church; for perhaps such discourses were never more necessary than in these our days; and, therefore, without adding any thing further in apology for my present undertaking, in discoursing upon these words, I shall endeavour,

First, So to fix the bounds of moral truth and falsehood, that we may know, when we transgress this prohibition, and when not.

Secondly,

SECONDLY, To prove the latter to be evil in itſelf, and to ſhew wherein its eſſential turpitude or malignity conſiſts; and,

LASTLY, To point out the ill effects of it upon ſociety in general, upon the perſon deceived, and eſpecially upon the deceiver himſelf.

FIRST then, we are to fix the bounds of moral truth and falſehood. As God deſigned man not ſo much for ſpeculation, as for action, not ſo much for a Philoſopher, as an uſeful member of ſociety; he doth not require from him a perfect knowledge of the nature of all thoſe things, or an indubitable certainty of all thoſe facts, which may be the ſubject of diſcourſe; but only ſuch a knowledge of them, as he may attain unto by a diligent uſe of the ordinary means of information: So that in reſpect of his underſtanding, a man may very often be in an unavoidable miſtake, and act or ſpeak accordingly; and yet be blameleſs. The defects of his underſtanding are criminal only, when he neglects the means of information. But in reſpect of his will, the caſe is quite different.—As God hath made man a free agent, he expects,

pects, that he ſhould determine to act up to that knowledge of his duty, to which he hath attained; allowing of no perverſeneſs in his will; and for this reaſon a defect in the underſtanding, is only an infirmity; but one in the will, is rebellion.

To apply theſe remarks to the ſubject, now under conſideration. If a man's notions are exactly agreeable to the nature and reality of things, and his affirmations or negations, agreeable to his notions; then what he ſaith, is both logically and morally true; becauſe they are conſonant both to the reality of things, and alſo to his own ſentiments concerning them; but logical truth is not that, which we now enquire after. A man's notions may be wrong, and his diſcourſe ſuch as his notions are; and yet if he ſpeaks ſincerely according to his judgment and firm perſuaſion, he ſhall not deſerve the ſcandalous imputation; eſpecially if he hath taken proper care in order to his own information: Or if he have not, yet if he really believes, as he ſpeaks, he is not guilty of the ſin of Lying, but of Raſhneſs; which, indeed, is a ſin of moral defect; becauſe if it had not been for a fault

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in his will, he might have been better informed. But though raſhneſs be a ſin, yet there is a greater guilt in any wilful and deliberate ſin, than in the ſame act, proceeding from raſhneſs only.

THE inferior faculties, which are ſubſervient to the information of the underſtanding are fallible, as daily experience ſhews, and, therefore, we may form wrong apprehenſions of things, and in conſequence thereof affirm what is falſe, or deny what is true, and ſo by a defect in the underſtanding, both be deceived ourſelves, and deceive others alſo. If we have made a juſt uſe of all the means of information, and notwithſtanding are miſtaken, this is invincible ignorance, and the conſequent falſehood involuntary and excuſable.

BUT, Secondly, ſuppoſe a man hath not made uſe of all the means of information, that he might; yet if he hath common probability in things of ordinary concernment, and upon this affirms or denies falſely, having no reaſon to doubt the truth of what he affirmed or denied; he would be very excuſable in the ſight of

God and man: And the reaſon is, becauſe there is no walking by demonſtration in all the ordinary matters of common life. But we muſt be very cautious, how we extend the benefit of this obſervation to things of great moment, wherein it is dangerous to be deceived ourſelves, or to deceive others: Nothing leſs than the higheſt probability, and a general concurrence of all circumſtances, being ſufficient to juſtify a man in his aſſertions concerning ſuch matters; for in general from things of the loweſt to thoſe of the higheſt importance, our evidence for the truth of any aſſertion ought to riſe in proportion to its importance. Bare probability would by no means juſtify a ſolemn atteſtation, whereby the life, reputation, or property of our neighbour would be affected.

And thus we have conſidered the nature of falſehood, as it may proceed from a defect in the underſtanding; we are next to conſider it, as it proceeds from a fault in the will. Now as every human action, that ariſes from a fault in the will, is evil: So it is in our aſſertions alſo.

First,

First. If we positively affirm any thing as true, of which we have no knowledge, upon bare conjecture, and at all adventures; this is properly a Lie or moral Falsehood; in as much as we give greater assurance to others of the truth of what we say, than we ourselves have, and so leave it entirely to chance, whether our neighbour shall be deceived or not; we may not therefore positively affirm absolute uncertainties without incurring the guilt of the sin forbidden in the text. It is a good rule to take care, that conjectures in us appear such to others, and that our assertions be more or less positive in proportion to the evidence, we have concerning the truth of them.

Secondly. If we affirm what we do not believe, or deny what we do believe (no matter whether our judgments be right or wrong) we are transgressors of the precept. If our judgments be right, we must of necessity be transgressors, because we have asserted somewhat contrary both to truth itself, and to our own opinions: But if our judgments be wrong and consequently what we say, true, we are not the less guilty; because though what we assert be

in that caſe true, yet we believed it not to be ſo; and that is true or falſe with reſpect to us, which we verily believe to be the one or the other, it being plain, that when we affirmed, what we did not, or denied, what we did believe; we did verily believe, we had deceived our neighbour, and it is to be aſcribed to our ignorance only, that we did not deceive him. But he, that doth no harm to his neighbour, only becauſe he knows not how, or becauſe, by chance, he was miſtaken in the means, which, contrary to his intention, proved harmleſs, is as guilty in the ſight of God, as if he had ſucceeded, and known how to have compleated his miſchievous deſigns with full effect. Words do not primarily ſignify things themſelves, but our conceptions concerning them; wherever, therefore, there is a diſagreement betwixt our words and conceptions, there is properly a moral Falſehood.

THIRDLY. If we affirm what we know to be falſe, or deny what we know to be true, this is deceit in the higheſt degree. As it is in bare aſſertions, ſo it is in promiſes: If we make a promiſe, which we never intend to perform, that

that promiſe is a moral Falſehood: If we promiſe and intend to perform; but afterwards change our minds, and reſolve otherwiſe; when we ſo change our minds, we falſify the promiſe; but if through inability only, we fail of performance, we are ſincere and unblamable, if the promiſe were not raſh in itſelf. The rule, therefore, for our conduct is this: Our hearts and tongues, our thoughts and words, muſt always agree; and then, although we ſhould be in an error, as to the philoſophical truth of things, or the reality of facts; yet if we have uſed proper induſtry to inform ourſelves, we may be deceived, but not deceivers; may ſpeak untruths, but not lies; and ſo in our promiſes, if we be not over-raſh in making them, we ſhall not be unfaithful, though afterwards, through ſome unforeſeen event, we ſhould be unable to fulfil them.

But, Fourthly, there are other things beſides words, viz. Certain actions and geſtures, which, partly by nature, and partly by inſtitution and uſe, are become expreſſive of the mind; and, therefore, an abuſe of theſe natural, cuſtomary or inſtituted ſigns of our thoughts or intentions

intentions may denominate a man, a deceiver. He, that only inclines his head in token of aſſent; but afterwards denies, that he gave any ſuch aſſent, is equally guilty with the man that diſclaims the aſſent, he gave in expreſs terms. Silence is often interpreted into a conſent, for as much as a man may be preſumed to allow, in ſome caſes, that, to which, when it is propoſed to him, he doth not declare his diſſent.

AGAIN, ſince the doing of ſomethings implies the forbearance of others, naturally repugnant thereto; he that doth thoſe, yet abſtains not from theſe, may be juſtly termed a deceiver. A conſtant attendance upon the duties of religion, a grave and ſerious deportment and the like, being natural ſigns of a religious life and ſuitable diſpoſitions of mind; if any man, notwithſtanding ſuch an outward appearance of ſanctity, do lead a vicious courſe of life, being full of inward uncleanneſs, and concealed iniquity, he is continually telling a barefaced Lie to the world, and thus it is that hypocriſy comes in for its ſhare in the guilt of this abominable ſin.

FIFTHLY.

FIFTHLY. Equivocations are alſo moral Falſehoods; for he, that equivocates, makes uſe of terms of a double meaning, and ſo circumſtantiates his narration, that he, who hears him, may take them in that ſenſe, in which they are not true, (i. e.) he actually intends to deceive.

LASTLY. All propoſitions, that are falſe without the addition of ſomething, that is ſecretly added by the relator in his own thoughts are moral Falſehoods. For ſuch mental reſervations are no part of the propoſitions with reſpect to that perſon, to whom they are ſpoken. For the ſame account is to be made of thoſe things, that do not appear, as of thoſe, that are not; and beſides they, that make uſe of ſuch mental reſervations do always intend to deceive; and, therefore, both the matter and form of moral Falſehood muſt be in them.

FROM the foregoing diſſertation, it follows, that a Lie or moral Falſehood, which is but another name for the ſame thing, is an abuſe of words or thoſe other ſigns, which nature, cuſtom or inſtitution, have made the inſtruments of the conveyance of our thoughts to each other, by

by which we do intend to deceive our neighbour, or do not take ſuch care, as we ought, that we do not deceive him. And from hence it will follow, that every falſehood is not a lie; for though it hath the matter, it may want the form.

Men do many times ſpeak and report that, which is not true, which yet they themſelves verily believe to be true. Many times we repeat the reports of other men, which, becauſe we believed them to be true, we relate as true; and in ſuch caſes are rather deceived than deceivers, having no intention in ſo doing to impoſe upon the credulity of others. I do not ſay this, as if bare hearſay and popular rumours were ſufficient to juſtify a repetition of every ſlanderous report; ſuch popular rumours being very often falſe; but upon a ſuppoſition, that they were true, Chriſtian charity will in many caſes oblige us to conceal, rather than to divulge, our neighbour's diſhonour. And, therefore, though he, that hath been deceived by another man, is not properly a Liar, when he reports a falſehood, in conſequence of his having been ſo deceived; yet a perſon who catcheth up

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common rumours, with a too haſty credulity, and afterwards diſperſes them, expoſes himſelf to the cenſure of raſhneſs and folly, which, though not equal in guilt to an original falſehood of his own forgery, is however a crime; and for this reaſon, in courts of civil judicature, the ſpreading of another man's falſe report ſhall in ſome caſes bring an obligation on the publiſher to repair the damage, occaſioned by it, whoever was the author.

Again, a man may ſpeak of things, as if they really had been, which never were, nor ever ſhall be; and yet ſo circumſtantiate his narration, that the hearers may plainly perceive the drift and ſcope of it; and he neither be a deceiver, nor they deceived. For this reaſon, fictions known to be what they are, and deſigned to improve and civilize the mind, are commendable and uſeful; but when intended to corrupt and debauch it, they certainly do involve the authors of them in a heavy guilt, not as moral falſehoods indeed, but as artful and prevailing inſinuations of vice and immorality. Parables, fables and figurative expreſſions alſo are not comprehended under this definition, for neither

as to the drift and ſcope of them are they falſehoods, nor have they any tendency to deceive; and ſo have neither the matter nor form of lies.

The Scripture itſelf, which, we may be ſure, preſerves a ſtrict regard to truth, abounds with them, which, though they cannot be literally verified of thoſe things, to which they are applied; yet are they very true in the tranſferred and figurative ſenſe. Thus Jotham's Parable of the trees chooſing them a king, was aptly enough accommodated to his deſign, and the underſtanding of thoſe, to whom he ſpoke. In like manner, many of our bleſſed Saviour's parables are related as matters of fact, though perhaps the very inſtances related never happened; yet theſe are no falſehoods; becauſe, when explained and transferred to their proper ſubjects, they do contain important truths and uſeful inſtructions. By the ſame rule we are to judge of his figurative expreſſions alſo; as when he calls himſelf a Door, ſignifying, that there is no entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, but by him; a Vine, to ſignify, that without ſuch a vital union betwixt him and us, as bears ſome analogy to that betwixt the trunk of a tree and its branches, we can bear no fruit, no more

more than the branch, when ſeparated from the Vine, which withereth away, and is fit for nothing but the flames. The ſame obſervation is to be extended to thoſe other expreſſions: This is my Body, ſpeaking of the Bread, which was broken, and this is my Blood, ſpeaking of the Wine, that was poured out; by which he means no more than, that the bread, which was broken, was a proper Symbol, whereby to repreſent his Body, that was to be broken; as the Wine was of his blood, that was to be ſhed, to make attonement for our ſins. A man muſt reject the moſt common and general rules of interpretation, before he can be of any other opinion.

In like manner ironical and innocent railleries are not comprehended under the former definition; and, therefore, are not moral falſehoods, and theſe alſo the Scripture uſes, thus: The Prophet Elijah mocks the Prieſts of Baal, and ſaith: Cry aloud for he is a God, and ſo forth: The Prophet well knew, that Baal was no God; and deſigned, that they, to whom he was then ſpeaking, ſhould know, he meant to ſay ſo.— Such expreſſions are indeed the ſharpeſt reproofs; and as they are deſigned, ſo are they commonly underſtood, and there is no doubt but theſe of

the Prophet were ſo underſtood by the very Prieſts of Baal themſelves. Theſe, then, cannot be accounted moral Falſehoods, which are ſo far from being intended to create errors in the minds of men, or to confirm them therein, that on the contrary they are uſed on purpoſe to convince them of their errors, and to make them appear the more abſurd and ridiculous. In ſuch caſes by ſeeming to affirm we do moſt effectually deny; it being the beſt way to explode ſuch abſurdities, barely to affirm them.

And thus have I endeavoured to fix the bounds of moral Truth and Falſehood, that we might know how to put away lying, and to ſpeak every man truth with his neighbour.—But there are a ſet of men, who allow a greater latitude in theſe matters; and dividing lies into two kinds, according to the intention of the ſpeaker to do an injury, or a kindneſs, to his neighbour, they call the former the malicious, and the latter the officious, lie. The former they condemn; but pronounce the latter not only venial, but commendable, and in ſome caſes meritorious. In this perſuaſion many indulge themſelves in theſe officious Falſehoods, till

till they contract a habit of deceiving in both kinds. This being a moſt dangerous and pernicious doctrine, I ſhall deſire your patience, whilſt I make a few ſhort remarks upon it, and then conclude.

FIRST, then, we do not deny, but that the malicious Lie is a Sin of a more complicated guilt than the other. There may be a leſs degree of guilt in one action, than another, and yet both be ſinful. To deceive, with a deſign to divert, may be a ſin; though to deceive with a deſign to deſtroy be a much greater. If the effect of any action could denominate it virtuous or vicious, the rule of duty would be a moſt uncertain thing; ſince no man can foreſee the event of his own actions. To admit any ſuch doctrine would be to unfix the foundations of good and evil, of truths and falſehood, and make them things uncertain and precarious. Falſehood is Falſehood, whatever be the iſſue; and conſequently a ſin; and neither the deſigning nor obtaining a good end can take away the guilt of it.

AGAIN, if it were lawful to deceive, in order to promote our neighbour's welfare, all mankind muſt know this, as well as the deceiver himſelf. But when this opinion is once univerſally

univerſally received, ſuch falſehoods loſe their effect; for no man will be encouraged by the declaration of another, who, he knows, is perſuaded, that he may lawfully deceive him. But this doctrine appears to be not only uſeleſs and abſurd, but criminal alſo, by the evil conſequences that have attended it, and thoſe worſe practices, that have ſheltered themſelves under it.

If it be allowable to deceive, to procure ſome advantage to our neighbour, much more to promote our own intereſt. For whatſoever action the love of our neighbour will juſtify us in doing for him; the love of ourſelves will juſtify us in doing for ourſelves, the love of ourſelves being the meaſure of our love to our neighbour. This conſequence, however the patrons of this doctrine diſavow; though they allow a man to affirm a falſehood, or deny a truth, to promote another's welfare; yet they abſolutely forbid him to do ſo, in order to advance his own.—And yet for the reaſon now aſſigned, if the one be lawful, the other muſt be ſo too.

Again, if we may ſpeak falſely, to promote the welfare of our neighbour, why not to advance the glory of God, to whom we are under infinitely greater obligations? As this is a neceſ-

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ſary conſequence, the advocates for the doctrine, we are now expoſing, do earneſtly contend for the lawfulneſs of ſuch pious frauds. Under the influence of this reaſoning the Romaniſts pretend to juſtify their legerdemain miracles and holy cheats. This is the error, that hath filled houſes and churches with ſpurious relics, without number; and to it we muſt aſcribe the production of ſo many golden legends, abounding with the fabulous lives of Saints, that never lived; and long narrations of pious and wonderful actions, that were never done. So ſtrangely do human doctrines corrupt true religion. So many other errors doth one leading error introduce, and ſo extravagant a miſtake it is to think that the intereſts of truth can be advanced by Deceit and Falſehood. To deal thus with God is in fact to mock him, and therefore Job's reproof of his pretended friends was moſt pertinent and juſt, What will ye ſpeak wickedly for God and talk deceitfully for him? As one man mocketh another, do ye ſo mock him? He will ſurely reprove you. To teach otherwiſe, is in effect to teach that men may do evil, that good may come; and yet St. Paul hath peremptorily pronounced of ſuch teachers, that their damnation

nation is juſt; and our Saviour himſelf hath plainly told us, that he, who ſhall break the leaſt of his commandments, and teach men ſo, ſhall be leaſt in the kingdom of Heaven!

LET this, therefore, be our concluſion from the foregoing diſcourſe, That we do not ſpeak that, which is contrary to truth, upon any pretence of advancing our neighbour's welfare, or our own; or of promoting the glory of God: For he ſcorns the honour, that muſt be aſcribed to Falſehood and Deceit, and will not hold that man guiltleſs, that, under the pretence of doing him ſervice, tranſgreſſes his laws, and diſobeys his poſitive commands. Let not any man, therefore, dare to deceive his neighbour for fear of evil, or hope of good; to avoid puniſhment, or to gain the favour of the mighty; to defeat the deſigns of others, or to carry on his own, and much leſs merely to gratify his own vanity, or yet of his idle companions; for ſurely, it is next to madneſs to ſuffer compliance to prevail over truth and duty, and ſo to ſtudy to pleaſe men, as at the ſame time to incur the diſpleaſure of a moſt Holy, moſt Righteous, and Almighty God, to whom be aſcribed Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON VI.

SERMON VI.

Eph. iv. ver. 25.—Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.

IN a former diſcourſe on theſe words, I propoſed, Firſt, To fix the bounds of moral Truth and Falſehood. Secondly, To prove the latter to be evil in itſelf. And, Thirdly, To point out its manifold evil effects upon ſociety in general; the perſon deceived; and the deceiver himſelf.

To the firſt propoſition we have ſpoken largely in that former diſcourſe. We proceed now, ſecondly, to prove, That Lies or moral Falſe-

hoods are evil in themſelves; and this will evidently appear from a conſideration:

FIRST, of the end, for which the uſe of ſpeech was given.

SECONDLY, of our obligations to each other, as members of ſociety.

THIRDLY, Of the natural affections of the ſoul of man, with reſpect to truth and error: and,

LASTLY, From the oppoſition of deceit and falſehood to the nature of God, as alſo to his expreſs and poſitive commands.

AND firſt, I ſay, that the very end for which the uſe of ſpeech was given to mankind, proves plainly, that Deceit and Falſehood are evil in themſelves. God gave us this faculty to the end, that beſides praying to him for the good things of which we ſtand in need, and praiſing him for thoſe we have received; we might the more eaſily and perfectly convey our ſentiments

to

to each other ; and by mutual information and conſolation, the better promote each other's welfare. Theſe are the great ends for which the uſe of ſpeech was given : But he that telleth Lies, inſtead of expreſſing his real ſentiments, inſtead of informing, inſtructing, or comforting his neighbour, deceives and mocks him. For it is abſolutely impoſſible, that Falſehood ſhould anſwer any of the ends of truth, or that the abuſe of a faculty ſhould promote the good effects, which God who gave it, did intend, ſhould be promoted by the right uſe of it. Every falſe man therefore is guilty of abuſing and perverting this faculty to an end, directly contrary to the deſign of the donor. But if God, whoſe wiſdom is infinite, did wiſely ordain the uſe of words for the communication of truth, which naturally tends to the promotion of the welfare of mankind, as Falſehood doth to the obſtruction of it ; then it will follow, that an abuſe of words, contrary to their original deſign, muſt be the effect of wickedneſs and folly, and evil in itſelf, as it implies a contravention to the deſigns of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs.

As there is no inconſiſtency in the nature and attributes of God, ſo neither in the works that he hath made, but an univerſal harmony runs through the whole: How great an offence then muſt it be, to interrupt that harmony, and be an exception to the general conſiſtency of nature, as every deceiver is, being a ſort of contradiction to himſelf? His heart and tongue point different ways, what the one affirms the other denies: Such a man is well deſcribed by a certain author in the following words, "The fouleſt heart, but faireſt tongue, his mouth belies his mind." Could we look into the heart, at the ſame time we hear the voice of a deceiver, I am apt to imagine, that the firſt ſight of the moſt monſtrous productions would not be more ſhocking. In ſhort, a liar is a moral prodigy, and no doubt to that God, who ſees at once the motion of the lips, and the internal ſentiments of the heart, he muſt appear equally monſtrous and abominable; for God requireth truth in the inward parts, and lying lips are an abomination unto him. And thus it appears, that Falſehood is evil in itſelf, as it is an unnatural abuſe of the faculty of ſpeech, to an end directly contrary to that, for which God out of his

his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs deſigned and gave it. This will alſo appear.

SECONDLY, from a conſideration of our mutual obligations, as members of ſociety, that man is by nature deſigned for ſocial life, his inclination to company, and averſion to ſolitude; the faculties and capacities by which he is fitted for communication and mutual intercourſe; and the neceſſity of it to his well-being, do plainly ſhew. So ſtrong is our natural inclination to ſociety, and ſo peculiar to mankind are both the inclination and faculties, by which we are fitted for it, that many authors have thought, man may be as properly defined a ſocial, as a rational animal: And, beſides this inclination to ſociety, ſo many are the benefits flowing from it in the way of information, council, comfort, and mutual help, that ſhould a man be excluded from all commerce with the reſt of his own ſpecies, and interdicted all manner of aſſiſtance from them, he muſt either degenerate into a brute, or be miſerable to the laſt degree; ſomewhat like one member of the body that ſhould receive no help or benefit from the reſt. 'Tis a falſe

falſe opinion of merit in a recluſe life, that makes it tolerable. As every man therefore muſt be ſuppoſed to deſire to be entitled to the benefits ariſing from ſociety, he muſt alſo be ſuppoſed to have ſubmitted himſelf to all thoſe rules of intercourſe, that are neceſſary to the attainment of thoſe benefits.

Now, the general rule of intercourſe in ſociety, from which all others muſt be deduced, is this, that we ſhould do to others, as we would they ſhould do unto us. From this general rule, applied to the preſent ſubject, this particular one, that no man ſhould, in anywiſe deceive his neighbour, will neceſſarily be inferred; for he, that would not be deceived himſelf. ought not to deceive another.---Now, let any man aſk himſelf this queſtion, whether he thinks other men obliged to ſpeak the truth, if they ſpeak to him at all, and then apply the anſwer to himſelf? Falſehood, therefore, by the forementioned rule of equity is a manifeſt act of injuſtice to the perſon, that is led into error by it; 'tis a violation of the right of that man, to whom the falſe ſpeech is addreſſed.

To

To the end, therefore, that ſpeech may duly obtain its end by uniting men in ſociety, and that by the abuſe of it man ſhould not be rendered leſs ſociable, than he would be, if he could not ſpeak at all :--It muſt be ſuppoſed to be a precept of the law of nature, that no man ſhall deceive another by thoſe ſigns, which have been inſtituted for the conveyance of our ſentiments to each other.

FROM what hath been ſaid, it may be inferred, that ſpeech is a moſt uſeful inſtrument of uniting men in civil ſociety, and promoting the great ends of it; but when perverted and abuſed tends to the diſturbance and diſſolution of it, and is rather a curſe than a bleſſing to mankind: That Falſehood is ſuch an abuſe or perverſion of it, contrary to the end for which it was deſigned, to the manifeſt diſturbance of ſociety: That ſuch an abuſe of language is an offence againſt the law of nature; that, as the corruption of any thing is criminal in proportion to its excellency and uſe, Falſehood and Lies muſt be crimes of a very henious nature: And, laſtly, as all offences againſt the law of nature

nature, to the prejudice of our neighbour are unjuſt, it muſt be a moſt criminal act of injuſtice to deceive by a falſe report. And thus it appears, that falſehood and lies are evil in themſelves, as they defeat the very end for which the uſe of ſpeech was given, and are alſo manifeſt violations of the duties we owe to each other, as members of civil ſociety.

But there is another duty beſides that of injuſtice, incumbent on us as members of ſociety; I mean that of charity, againſt which deceit and falſehood are equally an offence. The obligation of juſtice is founded on that general maxim of equity before laid down; that of charity is, in ſome degree, founded upon the ſame maxim, but principally upon that ſimilitude of nature, that alliance and affinity of blood that is between man and man, as children of the ſame common parents, and conſequently brethren. He, that is unjuſt, muſt neceſſarily be uncharitable; for charity is ſo far from doing wrong, that it will do nothing that is unkind; yea, on the contrary, it will exert itſelf in all acts of kindneſs and beneficence, as opportunity

portunity is afforded. Charity, therefore, goes a length beyond juſtice in this matter; for though in ſome caſes, it might not be an offence againſt ſtrict juſtice or truth, to do or ſay thoſe things, from which our neighbour may take occaſion to form a falſe judgment, and ſo to deceive himſelf; yet charity will conſtrain us in this caſe, and prohibit the uſe of our own juſt liberty, where it may turn to our neighbour's prejudice. This is the excellency of charity, that it not only doth no evil, but to the utmoſt of it's power prevents the evil, that might be accidentally occaſioned by its own innocent actions, herein imitating the example of St. Paul, whoſe reſolution was, that if meat ſhould make his brother to offend, he would eat no fleſh, whilſt the world ſhould ſtand, rather than make his brother to offend. 1 Cor. 8, 13. He, therefore, that deliberately deceives his neighbour, muſt never pretend to love him, or to act up to the laws of charity. And this will appear yet more evident from that which falls next under conſideration, viz.

THE natural diſpoſition of the mind towards truth and error. Hunger is not a more natural appetite in the body, than a deſire of knowing the truth is in the ſoul. What good is to the will, that truth is to the underſtanding; in the regular actings of which powers upon their proper objects, the happineſs of man conſiſts; yea, the future happineſs of the bleſſed ſpirits above is ſuppoſed to reſult as well from the knowledge of truth, as from a love of the ſupreme good.

As Truth is an object, which when poſſeſſed, gives the moſt agreeable pleaſure to the mind, ſo Falſehood and Error are the objects of its ſtrongeſt averſon. Hence it is, that even he who impoſes moſt upon others, will not bear to be impoſed upon himſelf; and that no man is more the object of our indignation and reſentment than a Deceiver; that nothing is more diſhonourable than being detected in a Lie, nor any thing more provoking than being charged with the guilt of it. He, therefore, that deceives his neighbour, conceals from him that in which he naturally takes delight, and

under

under the ſemblance of Truth obtrudes upon him Falſehood and Error, to which he hath the ſtrongeſt averſion; inſtead of a goddeſs he gives him a cloud; and inſtead of a fiſh, a ſerpent. And ſurely ſuch a man muſt never pretend to love the perſon whom he thus abuſes; and if not, when we only conſider Truth and Falſehood, as barely agreeable or diſagreeable to the mind; How much leſs when the good effects of the one, which are inevitably loſt, and the ill effects of the other, which are ſeldom avoided (when men act upon the errors they have imbibed, as indeed they generally do) are added to increaſe the injury? Truth is naturally the parent of a right conduct, as error is of a wrong one. Every man, therefore, that loves his neighbour will rather correct than multiply his errors and miſtakes. But we have yet a higher charge againſt Falſehood and Deceit, as will appear:

FOURTHLY, From its oppoſition to the divine nature. God is repreſented to us in holy ſcripture, as a Being of infinite veracity: He is there called a God of Truth, and we are alſo

aſſured, that he cannot lie. Now, as God is infinitely holy and happy, the divine nature muſt be the ſtandard whereby the holineſs or happineſs of his creatures is to be meaſured. So far as any of his creatures reſemble him, ſo far they are holy, and conſequently happy: And ſo far as they have degenerated from that likeneſs, ſo far they are fallen, not o ly from perfection and purity, but alſo from happineſs:— They have corrupted themſelves, and have put on the nature of the enemy of God and all goodneſs. He, that committeth ſin is of the Devil; for the Devil ſinneth from the beginning; but he, who telleth lies, hath of all others contracted the neareſt likeneſs to that apoſtate ſpirit. Since then truth and falſehood are as oppoſite to each other, as light and darkneſs, if truth be eſſentially good, falſehood muſt be eſſentially evil, *that* as agreeable to the divine nature, *this* as repugnant to it.

And this naturally leads us into the ſame ſentiment with a very judicious writer, who hath obſerved, that although the ſins of ſenſuality are of a very odious nature; yet pride, malice,

malice, hypocriſy and deceit, are more abominable in the ſight of God than they: The former may be aſcribed to the prevalence of luſt or appetite over reaſon, which may in ſome degree be imputed to human infirmity; but the latter muſt be aſcribed to that dominion, which the Devil hath uſurped over the ſoul of man. The ſins of ſenſuality are not ſuited to his nature. As he is a ſpirit, his evil diſpoſitions are more refined and intellectual. And of this kind are falſehood and deceit, which are more directly contrary to the nature and deſign of religion and carry more of the expreſs image and ſuperſcription of that apoſtate ſpirit upon them, than any carnal luſt whatſoever. And therefore as I think no character more amiable than that which our Saviour gives of Nathaniel, "Behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no guile." So I know of none more odious, than that of being the father of lies.

But falſehood and lies are alſo proved to be evil in themſelves from a conſideration of their oppoſition, not only to the laws of God, diſcoverable by the light of natural reaſon; but alſo to

to his revealed and written law. The holy ſcriptures abound with injunctions of ſincerity and truth, and prohibitions of falſehood and deceit: They recommend the former with encomiums and promiſes; and by cenſures and threatenings endeavour to baniſh the latter out of the world. But alas! how often in vain? St. Paul tells us, that the law was not made for the righteous; but for the lawleſs and diſobedient, amongſt whome he reckons liars and perjured perſons; and St. John hath aſſured us, that whoſoever loveth or maketh a lie ſhall not enter into the new Jeruſalem; but that all liars ſhall have their part in the Lake, that burneth with Fire and Brimſtone, which is the ſecond death. But theſe and other texts of holy ſcripture to the ſame purpoſe are ſo often ſounded in your ears, that I cannot think it neceſſary at this time to recite any more of them. Thus it is ſufficiently proved, that moral falſehood is evil in itſelf.

I proceed now in the laſt place to point out its pernicious effects, Firſt, upon ſociety in general. Secondly, upon the perſon deceived; and Laſtly, upon the deceiver himſelf.

FIRST,

First, upon ſociety in general. The ſecurity and happineſs of man in his preſent ſtate ariſes principally from the combination of particular perſons into ſocieties; that which cements and holds together theſe ſocieties, is compact; and that, by which compact ſubſiſts, is truth; but where fraud and falſehood, like a plague or canker begin to infect ſociety, the band, which held together the parts compounding, is preſently broken; men are put to a loſs, where to faſten their dependencies, and forced to ſhift every one for himſelf.

Where men practiſe falſehood and play tricks with each other, there will be perpetual ſuſpicions, evil ſurmiſings, doubts and jealouſies, which imbitter the minds of men and are the bane of ſociety. Now this ſhews the great malignity of fraud and falſehood, that it naturally tends to the deſtruction of ſocial happineſs, by deſtroying that mutual confidence by which the common intercourſe of the world muſt be carried on, and without which, men muſt firſt diſtruſt, then ſeparate and ſtand upon their guard with their hand againſt every one, and

and every one's hand againſt them. The happineſs of ſocieties depends upon the regular and faithful diſcharge of their reſpective duties, by every member of thoſe ſocieties, according to their ſeveral relations; but where fraud and falſehood take place not one of all theſe duties is performed. The Prince becomes a tyrant, the ſubject a traitor, the maſter an oppreſſor, the ſervant little better that a thief and a robber, the buyer and ſeller both a like cheats, each contending by artifice and falſehood to overreach the other; and thus they effectually deſtroy that public order, peace and happineſs, which it is their duty to maintain and promote. Such are the effects of deceit upon ſociety in general.

SECONDLY.—But above all others, the party deceived is moſt immediately affected. All hiſtories ſacred and profane, abound with inſtances, not only of whole nations, but alſo of particular perſons, deſtroyed by the treachery of others or their own credulity. No man that hath an evil deſign upon his neighbour's eſtate or life, will be ſo ignorant or impudent,

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as plainly to tell him ſo: If it be the former, that his avarice hath fixed its eye upon, he will firſt deceive him into a falſe opinion of his ſincere affection for him, and then take the opportunity of borrowing, what he never purpoſes to repay; or perſuade him perhaps to enter into large engagements for him, promiſing, it may be, with the moſt ſolemn oaths and imprecations, to diſcharge him from them at a certain time not long to come; and when he hath made the moſt of his own pretended, and his weak neighbour's real friendſhip, he will requite him with ingratitude and contempt, and leave him to his creditor's mercy, ſeldom found to be much ſuperior to his own. But if it be his life, that his malice ſeeketh after; then perhaps he will take Abſalom for his pattern, invite his brother to a feaſt, compliment and careſs him, until exceſs hath put him off his guard; then diſpatch him in the midſt of his confidence and credulity. Thus hath a pretended friendſhip often ſated that revenge, and accompliſhed thoſe villainous deſigns, which a profeſſed enmity never could have done. Who can count the numbers of thoſe, whom fair ſpeeches and falſe promiſes have betrayed into

inextricable ruin? And could you conſult thoſe, whom alone I can account more wretched, thoſe who are now confined to the regions of eternal darkneſs, in expectation of the judgment of the great day, it is probable, they would, and might with truth impute their ruin, not only to the deceitfulneſs of ſin and the wiles of the Devil; but principally to the deluſions of his agents, their firſt ſeducers.— In a word it is highly probable, that no example can be produced of a perſon in extreme miſery, who was not firſt deceived into it. Every deceitful perſon therefore ought to be deteſted, as a public enemy and common diſturber of the peace and welfare of mankind; every private perſon's intereſt being endangered by the perfidy and evil example of ſuch a wicked deceiver. He that hath to do with a falſe man, knows not where he is, nor what he does; he walks upon bogs and quickſands; wherever he treads he ſinks, and can find no ſure ground, whereon to ſet his foot; ſeldom diſcovering his miſtake, till the effects of it are without remedy. Every error in a man's judgment naturally produces another in his conduct, which as naturally brings damage to himſelf,

himſelf, greater or leſs, in proportion to the importance of the matter concerning which he is deceived. Promiſed favors are often the greateſt injuries, if not performed; as they do frequently betray a man into falſe confidences, prevent his own endeavours, and tempt him to neglect the advantages, that providence throws in his way to his great damage and diſappointment. Such are the ill-effects of Falſehood and Deceit upon the perſon deceived.

If then there be ſo much deceit in the world, ſo many that lie in wait to deceive, and the conſequences of being deceived are ſo much to be dreaded, eſpecially in matters of religion, then we ought to be always upon our guard, that we be not deceived with vain words; for no man deceives another, but with a deſign to gain ſome advantage over him.— Suffer me to illuſtrate this truth by a ſingle inſtance only. If a Jeſuit or other Popiſh Emiſſary can once deceive you into a firm belief of a fiery purgation after death, and alſo, that it is in his power, by his prayers, to procure for you a ſpeedy deliverance out of that

place of torment; from that time forwards he will find it no difficult matter both to unſtring your purſes and to fill his own. To return from this digreſſion.

I now proceed laſtly to ſhew its evil effects upon the deceiver himſelf. And the firſt I ſhall mention, is an utter loſs of all credit with all ſober and diſcreet perſons. Few men are more artful in deceiving, than others in detecting their impoſtures, which commonly are no ſooner detected, than divulged. A common deceiver, therefore, is ſeldom long concealed, and when once he is known. he is ſeldom believed, even when he ſpeaks the truth.

Now ſuppoſe this to be the caſe, and then tell me, where you will find any thing more uſeleſs and contemptible than ſuch a known deceiver. How meanly muſt he appear in the preſence of all that know him? No man can rely upon ſuch a one with ſafety to his affairs, or without a ſlur to his reputation He that truſts a detected knave, can expect no other recompence, than

than to be accounted a fool for his pains, as unfit to be relied upon for his weakneſs, as the other for his treachery.

It is a great calamity not to know whom to truſt; but it is a much greater to behave one's ſelf ſo, as not to be truſted. Now this is the lot of the falſe man, who is generally abandoned by all men of ſenſe and diſcretion, all ſuch as will not be falſe to their own intereſts. How uſeleſs and contemptible then muſt that man be, or what place can he fill in a common wealth, whom no body will either believe or employ? He is like the ſalt, that hath loſt its ſavour, fit only to rot and periſh upon a dunghill,

A ſecond effect of deceit upon the deceiver is this, that it generally brings down upon him the hatred and averſion of all men, but eſpecially of thoſe, that have, or might have been deceived by him. I do not ſay that a Chriſtian may lawfully hate any man; but if he may not hate the deceiver, he will abhor his practices, and avoid both him and them. I may add too, that of all men

men living the deceiver deſerves moſt to be hated. For whoſoever deceives a man doth not only all he can to ruin him; but what is worſe to make him ruin himſelf. Let it here be added, that few are ſo cautious, as to diſtinguiſh between the ſin and the ſinner; and therefore it too often happens, that the very beſt of men extend their hatred too far on theſe occaſions, both to the deceit and deceiver alſo.

The laſt effect of this ſin upon the deceiver himſelf is an eternal ſeparation from God. For no evil perſon nor thing can dwell with him. He that telleth lies, ſaith David, ſhall not tarry in my ſight; and if not in the ſight of a mortal man, how much leſs in the preſence of an infinitely pure and all ſeeing God? He that would aſcend into his holy hill, muſt work righteouſneſs and ſpeak the truth from his heart. But the unbelieving and abominable and murderers and whoremongers and ſorcerers and idolators and all liars ſhall have their part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimſtone; for without are dogs and ſorcerers, and whoſoever loveth and maketh a lie. Let ſuch conſider this, whoſe tongue and heart hold no correſpondence, who think

think it a maſterpiece of converſation to deceive, and make a prey of a credulous and well-meaning honeſty. Are dogs, are whoremongers and forcerers ſuch deſirable companions that a man would chuſe to make his abode with them for ever? Will the burning lake be found, ſo tolerable? Or will there be any one to drop refreſhment upon the falſe tongue; when it ſhall be tormented in thoſe flames? Or do they think that God is a liar, like themſelves, and that no ſuch things ſhall ever come to paſs; but that all theſe fiery threatenings ſhall vaniſh into ſmoak, and this dreadful, but moſt juſt ſentence blow off without execution! It is to be hoped that but few can ſo far deceive themſelves, as to imagine this.

THUS have we fixed the bounds of moral truth and falſehood; and proved the latter to be intrinſically evil, as a manifeſt violation of a moral right, repugnant both to juſtice and charity; and alſo an oppoſition to the nature of God and to his expreſs and poſitive commands: We have alſo ſhewn the malignity of its effects to be equal to the vileneſs of its nature; for it was this, that firſt brought ſin into the world, and ſince hath been, is, and ever

ever will be, the cauſe of all thoſe calamities, that diſturb it, making ſociety the greateſt of temporal bleſſings into a curſe, wherever it prevails; and, laſtly, with reſpect to the deceiver himſelf, we have ſhewn, that it deprives a man of all credit, and conſequently of all capacity of being uſeful in any condition of life whatſoever; draws down upon him the univerſal hatred and abhorrence of all men here; and finally ſubjects him to the wrath of God and eternal damnation hereafter. And now, though none of theſe conſiderations ſhould be ſufficient to recommend truth and ſincerity to the words and practices of men, and make them ſenſible of the baſeneſs of the ſin, and greatneſs of the guilt, that fraud or falſehood leaves upon the ſoul; yet let them be aſſured, that they will receive a more effectual conviction of all theſe things in that place of torment, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels, and all liars, by the juſt decree of that God, who, both in his threatenings and promiſes, will be true to his word, and cannot lie:—To whom be rendered and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honor and Majeſty, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for ever.—*Amen*.

SERMON VII.

SERMON VII.

Eph. v. 18. *Be not Drunk with Wine, wherein is Exceſs.*

THIS text conſiſts of two parts; a prohibition and an argument to enforce it: In the prohibition, the ſpecies is taken for the whole kind; for, doubtleſs, it is as criminal a violation of this prohibition, to be intoxicated with any other ſort of liquor, as with wine. To be drunk is to drink any ſuch liquor to exceſs; for all degrees of exceſs are criminal and pernicious, though not equally ſo; and conſequently muſt be ſuppoſed to be here prohibited. It is no more a ſin to drink wine, than to eat bread; the one was given to make glad the heart of man, and the other to

ſtrengthen it: The ſin lies not in the act, but in the exceſs; and whereſoever the exceſs, there the ſin, commences alſo.

But here it may be aſked, how ſhall we diſtinguiſh that indulgence, which is lawful, from that which is unlawful? Can you ſay, Hitherto you may go, and yet be within the bounds of ſobriety; but no further without being guilty of exceſs? To this I anſwer, that the Scripture hath not any where preciſely determined the bounds of temperance or intemperance, of ſobriety or exceſs; but hath left the matter to be determined by Chriſtian prudence and that caution, which will not fail to influence the conduct of every man, who hath the fear of God before his eyes. Such a one, we may be ſure, will not always be advancing too near the borders of his enemy's territories; leſt haply he ſhould be taken captive by him, when he is not aware. He will not always be doing all he may, who has determined with himſelf, that he will take the utmoſt care never to do what he ought not. When the line of partition is ſo very narrow, that one foot may be on

on the right, and the other on the wrong ſide of it at the ſame time; no wiſe man will come ſo near, as that he muſt of neceſſity be often tranſgreſſing, without the uſe of more than human caution: But though it was not neceſſary, nor perhaps poſſible, to preſcribe certain determinate limits to our indulgence in this matter, which ſhould be the meaſure of it to all alike (that being intemperance in one which would not be ſo in another, the circumſtances and conſtitutions of perſons making a wide difference between the lawful indulgences of the one and the other) yet there are certain general rules laid down in Holy Scripture for our direction in ſuch matters, which would be of great uſe, if duly attended to, and ſuch are theſe which follow: Abſtain from all appearance of evil. Be ſober, be vigilant, becauſe your adverſary, the Devil, like a roaring Lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour. Have no fellowſhip with the unfruithful works of darkneſs. If any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, then have I written unto you, ſaith the Apoſtle, not to keep company with ſuch a one, no not to eat.

Although, therefore, we need not be more particular on this head, yet in general, we ſay that all indulgence, that is prejudicial to a man's health, or beyond his ability; that weakens the powers of the mind, ſtrengthens temptation, or indiſpoſes for any ſocial or religious duty, muſt be criminal; and conſequently here prohibited. Be not drunk then is as much as to ſay, Drink not Wine, nor any other ſpirituous liquor to exceſs; and why? Becauſe therein is ἀσωτια that is, according to our tranſlation, exceſs, according to Scapula, prodigality, luxury, intemperance. But no one Engliſh word will fully explain the meaning of the Greek, which implies a kind of complex prodigality, ſuch as conſiſts in not preſerving, or rather in laviſhly waſting, or wickedly deſtroying all thoſe things, that a man is bound in duty and intereſt to preſerve and employ, as talents depoſited with him, to the honor of God, his own and his neighbour's beſt advantage. The talents I mean, are health, eſtate, reaſon, virtue, reputation, and not only his temporal, but his eternal intereſt alſo; all which the drunkard prodigally conſumes or deſtroys.—This being premiſed, I ſhall now proceed

proceed to prove, that Drunkenneſs is a moſt pernicious vice, deſtructive of all the bleſſings before mentioned.

And firſt, I ſay, that this vice is deſtructive of the health of the body. For proof of this part of the propoſition, I need only refer you to your own experience. How very few there are of this thirſty tribe, that live out half their days? How many are the diſeaſes, which they bring upon themſelves? How many are the fatal accidents, to which ſuch men are expoſed, and by which they are often deprived of life, in a condition very unfit for an appearance before an infinitely juſt and holy Judge? Are not loſs of appetite, vomitings, redneſs of eyes, aching heads, and trembling nerves, the common effects of every act of intemperance of this kind? And are not the vital powers greatly weakened by all ſuch acts of violence?—In ſhort, Drunkenneſs converts that, which God deſigned for making glad the heart of man, into a moſt effectual, though poſſibly ſometimes but a ſlow poiſon, by which, one way or other, more have been deſtroyed than

than either by peſtilence or war. Such ſelf-murderers are theſe unhappy men, who, in the language of the Prophet, ſwallow wine, until they are ſwallowed up of wine; rejoice, and ſleep a perpetual ſleep, and wake no more.—They fall, and riſe not again. While they are folded together as thorns, they ſhall be devoured, as ſtubble fully dry. Woe unto them, therefore, that are mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink. For as the fire devoureth the ſtubble and the flame conſumeth the chaff; ſo their root ſhall be as rottenneſs, and their bloſſom ſhall go up as duſt.

Secondly.—This vice is not leſs deſtructive of a man's eſtate, than of his health.—There are indeed ſome perſons, whoſe fortunes are too large to be entirely conſumed by the moſt expenſive intemperance; and there are others, whoſe avarice and injuſtice are a ſort of balance to their exceſs: Who gather by fraud or oppreſſion, that they may conſume it upon their luſts. But generally ſpeaking, great are the dilapidations of this vice in the eſtates of the moſt wealthy, and in lower life, it uſually bringeth

bringeth men to poverty. Whatſoever is ſpent in exceſs is loſt; all ſuch unneceſſary expence is a manifeſt diminution of a man's eſtate.—How great is the number of thoſe, whoſe fortunes have been ruined by that neglect of buſineſs only, which is the common effect of this vice? A continual waſte, without recruit, will reduce a mountain to the ſize of a mole-hill, and a rich man to beggary. Let a man's circumſtances be ever ſo opulent, yet he muſt ſuffer greatly by his unfitneſs for attention to buſineſs. And who, that is wiſe, will commit the management of his concerns to another, that is not qualified to take care of his own? Who will chuſe to have any dealings with a man, that is but rarely to be found in a diſcretional ſtate of mind, who muſt either be humoured in his folly and impertinence, or no affair muſt go forward? Every prudent man will induſtriouſly avoid all ſociety with ſuch a teſty, troubleſome companion. There are many, who are now become the unworthy objects of every good man's pity, that might have ſupported their credit with half the ſums, they prodigally waſted in riot and exceſs; and been in a condition of helping others, if they would

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but have reſtrained their appetites in due time. It would not be difficult to point out inſtances of perſons heretofore in a flouriſhing condition, thriving by honeſt induſtry, eſteemed and reſorted to by their neighbours, and maintaining good credit amongſt them, yet, in a few years, as this vice got the dominion over them, growing idle and neceſſitous, avoided by all ſober people, and contemptible both abroad and at home; not to mention other conſequences much more ſhocking. And, indeed, how juſtly may that man expect to be abhorred, even by thoſe of his own houſe, whoſe exceſs muſt, in a ſhort time either deſtroy himſelf, or reduce them to beggary.—How miſerable the reflection? And yet how often is this the dreadful alternative? How ſhocking muſt it be to hear the drunkard ſinging the Bacchanalian ſong, whilſt the wretched wife and children are clothed in rags, and forced to beg their bread or ſtarve? But it is not always that the immediate dependents on ſuch an intemperate perſon are the only ſufferers by his extravagance. The too credulous neighbour often pays the reckoning, and ſuffers a part, at leaſt, of the penance of his criminal indulgence.

indulgence. Hear thou, therefore, O! my Son, and be wiſe, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not amongſt wine-bibbers, or amongſt riotous eaters of fleſh; for the Drunkard and the glutton ſhall come to poverty; and drowſineſs, which is the common effect of theſe vices, ſhall clothe a man with rags.

THIRDLY.—As this vice is deſtructive of a man's health and eſtate, ſo likewiſe of his reaſon. The two leading faculties of the mind are judgment and memory: As either of theſe grows weak, the other is impaired of conſequence; they being mutually aſſiſtant to each other.—Now what is reaſon, I ſpeak of reaſon as it refers to practice, but the right exerciſe and application of both theſe faculties to the regulation of our actions? Whatſoever therefore it be, that hath tendency to weaken the power, or pervert the right uſe of thoſe faculties, muſt of neceſſity tend to the ſubverſion of reaſon.—Dotage is the viſible effect of a decayed memory; and madneſs, of a ſubverted judgment. But it is manifeſt, that Drunkenneſs is deſtructive of both theſe faculties: That it diveſts a man

of his underſtanding, and that forgetfulneſs is its companion, are proverbial ſayings, founded on experience and general obſervation. For the truth of the firſt, I need only ſend you to the midnight converſations of theſe bon-companions. They laugh, they cry; they love, they hate; they careſs with mutual fondneſs, and preſently, perhaps, their rage againſt each other is not to be appeaſed. Yourſelves, it may be preſumed, have ſeen or felt the horrid effects of ſuch intoxication under the direction of ambitious and deſigning men. Rational arguments will very ſeldom have any better effect upon a Drunkard than a madman. It is as truly ſaid of Drunkenneſs as of anger, that it is a ſhort madneſs. Every ſurfeit of this vice, and every return to ſuch exceſs, is an act of folly, or rather madneſs. It is not without reaſon, that the Drunkard hath been compared to the filthieſt of all brutal animals; for during the continuance of his intoxication, what is he better? But indeed, I know no beaſt, that can afford us ſuch an odious ſpectacle.—And for this reaſon, the Spartans made their ſlaves drunk, and then expoſed them to the view of their children, that they might learn to deteſt

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and abhor this ſcandalous vice, by being eye-witneſſes of the loathſome effects of it in others. Thus does this vice take away for the time the uſe of reaſon, and no doubt, the oftener it is ſupplanted, the weaker the powers of it muſt be ſo that we ſometimes ſee the effects remaining even in the intervals of exceſs. And ſimilar to theſe are the effects of this vice upon the memory, as well as judgment. The very end propoſed by ſome, in ſuch acts of intemperance is, that they may forget their cares. They chuſe an opiate, that increaſes the diſeaſe, puts a man off his guard, renders him tranſparent to the artful and deſigning, betrays the ſecrets, that ſobriety would conceal, and diſplays every defect within him, *Arcani fides prodiga pellucidior vitro.* So well known is this effect of this vice, that many politicians have artfully made uſe of it, as the beſt means of looking into the hearts of thoſe, whom they had a mind to chuſe into the number of their friends, or ſuſpected of ſecret enmity againſt themſelves. In ſhort, it is impoſſible, that the mind of man ſhould be preſerved in a ſtate of reaſon, vivacity or purity, without temperance: For nothing doth more certainly cloud the underſtand-

ing, debaſe a great man, or make a wiſe man look more like a fool: Nothing doth more expoſe men to the contempt of all that know them, yea, of the meaneſt of their own ſervants, or ſupply more fuel to brutiſh and wandering ſenſuality, than the ſurfeits of intemperance.

FOURTHLY. Drunkenneſs is equally deſtructive of a man's virtue, as of his health, eſtate, or reaſon. If all the powers of reaſon be ſometimes too weak to enable us to withſtand the force of temptation; how ſhall he, that daily diveſts himſelf of that faculty, be able to hold faſt his integrity againſt the ſolicitations of ſenſual luſt, and brutal appetite, inflamed by exceſs; againſt the wiles and violent aſſaults of the united powers of darkneſs? Sobriety and vigilance are abſolutely neceſſary to the Chriſtian ſoldier. No warrior hath to do with enemies, more vigilant, numerous, politic, or mighty. Our utmoſt vigilance, therefore, is neceſſary to our defence. But he, that would watch, muſt be ſober; and therefore it is, that ſobriety and vigilance are enjoined in Scripture, as it were, with the ſame breath, Be ſober, be vigilant.

vigilant. Be ye therefore ſober, and watch unto prayer: The eye cannot ſee danger at a diſtance, if ſobriety doth not hold up the head. Without vigilance, therefore, the Chriſtian can never maintain his ground, nor can he be vigilant without ſobriety. But neither will all our vigilance, without the aids of Divine Grace avail us much, for our ſufficiency is of God. We muſt, therefore, watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. But the Drunkard can neither watch nor pray as he ought. He cannot be filled with the ſpirit of Holineſs, whom fulneſs of wine hath transformed into a beaſt. He cannot ſing the ſpiritual ſong, making melody in his heart unto the Lord; for no religious action can be performed without the uſe of reaſon. And hence it comes to paſs, that the poor defenceleſs wretch is taken captive by the tempter at his will. It hath been diſputed, whether there be not a neceſſary connexion between all vices; becauſe upon a ſuppoſition of equal force in the temptations, there is nothing to reſtrain a man in one caſe, that would not in another. But though perhaps it would be too much to affirm, that there is ſuch a connexion betwixt all vices, that every one

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ſhall neceſſarily be productive of another; yet, this is certain, that Drunkenneſs abſolutely diſqualifies a man for the performance of any religious duty, and is the natural ſource of many vices, and conſequently muſt be doubly prejudicial to religion and virtue, both as it diſqualifies a man for the diſcharge of this duty, and alſo tempts him to the commiſſion of actual ſins. He never made any good progreſs in the Chriſtian life, that did not endeavour to practice every duty, and alſo to avoid every ſin; but neither of theſe things is, or can be done by thoſe, that wallow in intemperance, which robs them of their time, ſtifles reaſon and reflection, inflames luſt and paſſion, and renders all the efforts of Divine Grace ineffectual. And, therefore, as you would comply with any thing that is decent, moral, or religious, you muſt preſerve a ſtrict and conſtant ſobriety. You can have made but little progreſs in the ways of virtue, if you have not learned to controul that brutal appetite, which is always craving more. If you do not, through the Grace of God, bring your ſenſual appetites into a juſt ſubjection to your reaſon, they will ſoon become ſo violent as to overbear all that is good, and then there will

will be no rational conduct, but great confuſion in the frame of your mind, and in the courſe of your life and actions. For intemperance, wherever it prevails, deſtroys a man's reaſon, honor and conſcience, at once, and opens a wide gap for any ſin or folly, though ever ſo monſtrous and inhuman, to make its entrance. It perfectly bereaves the ſoldier of all that is great and noble in his character: A very child excells him in ſtrength, and an Idiot is his equal in diſcretion. He is neither fit to command nor to obey; to give orders, nor to execute them. He is unable to ſtand upon his guard, or to diſcern the face of an enemy from that of a friend. And when his ſenſes return to him, it will be matter of ſevere reflection, that he ſhamefully parted with his reaſon, his honor, and innocence for the moſt inconſiderable and tranſient pleaſure. Whilſt the Chriſtian ſoldier is temperate in all things, he may, by the aid of Grace, defend himſelf againſt the attacks of all his ſpiritual enemies; but Drunkenneſs is the known inlet to all ſorts of wickedneſs, as many criminals have with their dying breath confeſſed. This was the ſin, that led them firſt to a neglect of their duty to God, then to profaneneſs,

profaneneſs, lewdneſs, extravagance; thence to theft, robbery, and perhaps murder, by which, it is to be feared, they have at laſt been drowned in everlaſting perdition. And this naturally ſuggeſts another moſt melancholy conſideration, viz. the difficulty of reclaiming thoſe, that are once addicted to this vice; very few ever think at all of recovering themſelves out of this ſnare of the Devil. Some indeed reflecting, in their ſober intervals, upon the ill-effects of their paſt exceſſes, have ſtruggled long to break the chain, and yet relapſed.—Others, whom thoſe diſeaſes, that are the natural effects of this vice, have threatened with an immediate diſſolution, have, ſeemingly, made the moſt effectual vows of repentance and reformation: But upon an unexpected recovery, the ſame thirſt has revived, and they too ſoon returned like the dog to his vomit, and like the ſow, that was waſhed, to her wallowing in the mire. Here eſpecially the Preacher finds too often his breath ſpent in vain, and all his labour loſt. How often doth the Drunkard ſee his companions dropping one after another, without reflection or concern? He ſees the danger, which he will not ſhun; and chuſes rather

rather not to live, than not to drink, rather to ſacrifice his life, than to abandon his exceſs: And yet, one would think, that ſuch a one ſhould confine himſelf within the bounds of temperance, if it were only, that he might protract the approaching divorce, and live to drink the longer. But contrary to the ſuggeſtions of common prudence, in contempt of all admonitions of his friends, and thoſe, whoſe duty it is to warn him of his danger; in ſpite of the danger of death and damnation, he ruſheth upon ruin, as the horſe into the battle. He knoweth that poiſon and death are at the bottom of the cup, yet he will not forbear: Will not, did I ſay, in the latter ſtages of the progreſs of this vice, I might have ſaid, he cannot forbear. Solid food he cannot digeſt, that flaſh of heat, which the laſt draught ſupplied, is ſoon evaporated; cold ſhiverings, and languid ſpirits ſucceed; and nothing now can procure a moment's truce with pain, but a repetition of the fatal doſe; nothing can palliate the diſtemper, but that which was the cauſe of it; for as Drunkenneſs produceth Thirſt, ſo Thirſt produceth Drunkenneſs. O wretched

man that thou art! Who ſhall deliver thee from this body of death? Where is now thy boaſted liberty? Who hath woe; who hath ſorrow; who hath contention; who hath babbling; who hath wounds without cauſe; who hath redneſs of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to ſeek mixed wine. Look not then upon the wine, when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright; for at the laſt it biteth like a ſerpent and ſtingeth like an adder. Thine eyes ſhall behold ſtrange women, and thine heart ſhall utter perverſe things: Yea, thou ſhalt be, as he that lieth down in the midſt of the ſea, or upon the top of a maſt: They have ſtricken me, ſhalt thou ſay, and I was not ſick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When I ſhall wake, I will ſeek it yet again. In theſe words, the wiſe man hath moſt juſtly and elegantly deſcribed the many natural, and moral ill effects of this vice, and plainly pointed out the great difficulty of reclaiming ſinners of this claſs. Theſe are they, whom the Prophet repreſents, as ſtrong of appetite, as thoſe that can never have enough; that ſay, come ye and

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I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourſelves with ſtrong drink, and to-morrow ſhall be as this day, and much more abundant.

FIFTHLY.—This vice is as deſtructive of reputation, as of health, eſtate, reaſon, or virtue. A good name is rather to be choſen than great riches. The approbation of God indeed is to be prefered before that of man, becauſe he is approved, not whom man, but whom God commendeth; yet next to the approbation of God, I know no temporal bleſſing more to be deſired than the concurrent eſteem and approbation of good men. This being a ſort of external teſtimony to the judgment of a man's own mind; which doubles the joy, that reſults from a conſcience of having acted with prudence and integrity, and is productive of many other deſirable effects. Univerſal love is the natural effect of univerſal eſteem; as on the contrary univerſal contempt and hatred are the natural conſequences of an evil character, which renders a man, an uſeleſs member of ſociety, and deprives him of the power of doing good

to others, either by his advice or example, and alſo of all hope of receiving any good from them. And how can we conceive any thing more wretched and contemptible? Yet how great a bleſſing ſoever a good name may be, every Drunkard willingly deprives himſelf of it. For if reputation be the concurrent approbation and eſteem of good men, and muſt be founded on the prudence and integrity of the perſon eſteemed, it muſt be contrary to the nature of things to ſuppoſe the Drunkard to be otherwiſe than infamous and contemptible.— For Drunkenneſs is a moſt ſcandalous vice; and though it ſhould be ſuppoſed conſiſtent with ſome virtues, yet he that lives in the habitual practice of this vice, will be ſuſpected of many more; and whatever good qualities he may be poſſeſſed of, this vice will eclipſe them all. There are indeed many virtues, that may be counterfeited, and many vices, that may be artfully concealed; but Drunkenneſs wears no diſguiſe. In former times, this vice was thought ſo ſcandalous, that they, that were drunken, took care to be drunken in the night; but now, as if it were no longer to be reckoned amongſt the works of darkneſs, it often ſtalks about in

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open day, proclaiming its own ſhame, is open beforehand, and goeth before unto judgment, notorious to all, and well known to deſerve eternal vengeance. Let it alſo be obſerved, that not only the welfare of the ſinner himſelf, but alſo that of the ſociety to which he belongs, is very much affected by this vice. What the Drunkard conſumes in his own deſtruction, and to the diſhonor of God, is a robbing of the poor, and a diminution to national plenty.—To which it may be added, that when it becomes epidemical, it often brings down national judgments. Wo unto them, that riſe up early in the morning, that they may follow ſtrong drink, and continue until night, till wine inflame them. The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feaſts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither conſider the operations of his hands. Therefore, my people are gone into captivity, becauſe they have no knowledge; and their honorable men are famiſhed, and their multitude dried up with thirſt.—Therefore, Hell hath enlarged her mouth without meaſure, and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, ſhall deſcend into it.

And, this brings us laſtly to ſhew, that this vice is not more deſtructive of man's temporal, than his eternal intereſts. And indeed it is no wonder, that a vice, which transforms a man into a beaſt, weakens every faculty both of body and mind, laviſhly conſumes the good things, which God gave for the ſupport and comfort of mankind, upon its own luſt, to the great prejudice of ſociety in general, to the deſtruction of the ſinner himſelf, the temporal ruin of thoſe, that are dependent on him; and often to the eternal ruin of thoſe, that are led away by his evil example; that is naturally productive of many vices, more and more wicked than itſelf, that unfits a man for the performance of every ſocial and religious duty, and brings down perſonal and national judgments from God, who has denounced eternal vengeance againſt it. Let us, therefore, walk honeſtly, as in the day, not in Rioting and Drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs. But let us put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and not make proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof. Let us watch, and be ſober; becauſe our adverſary, the Devil, walketh about like a roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may

may devour: Let us take heed unto ourſelves, leſt at any time, our hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and Drunkenneſs, and ſo that day, the day of temptation, Death or Judgment, come upon us unawares: For as a thief ſhall it come, on all thoſe that dwell on the earth, and they ſhall not be able to reſiſt or eſcape. For neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God: For becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience. Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them; for if the evil ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: The Lord of that ſervant, ſhall come in a day, when he looketh not for him, and in an hour, when he is not aware, and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.

LET every one, therefore, that hath been guilty of a tranſgreſſion of this prohibition, repent him truly of his former exceſſes; and reſolve for the time to come, to be temperate in all things, to turn to God, by abſtinence and prayer, that his former wickedneſs may be forgiven him, through the merits of our Redeemer, to whoſe moſt juſt commands be given by us, and all, that are called by his name, due Reverence and Obedience, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

SERMON VIII.

Prov. xvii. *ver.* 13.—*He, that rewardeth Evil for Good, Evil ſhall not depart from his Houſe.*

THESE words have no neceſſary connexion, either with the antecedent, or ſubſequent parts of the context; and, therefore, I ſhall proceed immediately to conſider; firſt, the nature of the vice here ſpoken of; and, ſecondly, the puniſhment annexed to it.—The vice is ingratitude; ingratitude in the higheſt degree: For not to return good for good, is unjuſt and inhuman; but to return evil for good, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, and indeed I know

no other term, by which the malignity of ſuch a practice can be properly expreſſed, is diabolical. Every act of ingratitude, it muſt be confeſſed, is not equally vile and hurtful; yet as every act thereof partakes of the ſame turpitude, and as every vice has a natural tendency to arrive at its higheſt pitch in proceſs of time, and to produce ſimilar effects in every degree; we need not doubt, but that every degree of this vice will naturally have a ſhare in the puniſhment annexed to the higheſt.—Now as gratitude is properly a virtuous affection of the mind, diſpoſing to an inward ſenſe and outward acknowledgment of a benefit received, together with a readineſs to return the ſame, or the like, according to the abilities of the receiver, and the exigences of the benefactor; ſo ingratitude is a contrary vicious affection, which neither retains an inward ſenſe, nor diſpoſes to an outward acknowledgment of a benefit received, but on the contrary tempts the man ſo to act towards his benefactor, as if he had received an injury, or at leaſt had not received a benefit, from him.—This definition takes in, not only

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ſuch as deny, but ſuch as do not acknowledge the obligations, they are under for the good ſervices, that have been done to them; not only ſuch as reward evil for good, but ſuch as do not return one benefit for another, for all theſe are ſo many kinds or degrees of ingratitude.—A grateful perſon will not only retain a ſtrong ſenſe of the favors, he hath received; but out of the fulneſs of his heart, his tongue will ſpeak, and out of the affection of his heart his foot will be ſwift, and his hand open to make the beſt returns he can, to his benefactor.

As he is not a charitable man, that only ſaith to his neighbour, be warmed and filled, but giveth him not thoſe things, that be needful for the body: So he is not a grateful man, that acknowledges the favors of his benefactor in words only, and only doth him no evil for the good, he hath received. True gratitude is always in pain, till it be delivered, when it hath ſtrength to bring forth. – I know not any thing, that can give us a more juſt idea of the natural workings of this affection, than David's pious

expreſſion of his Gratitude, when his heart was filled with a lively ſenſe of the manifold mercies of God to him. "What ſhall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits towards me? I will receive the cup of Salvation and call upon the name of the Lord I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the preſence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's houſe, in the midſt of thee, O Jeruſalem, praiſe the Lord." Yea, he not only returns his own tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving, but invites all other men, yea, every thing, that hath breath, to aſſiſt him in the payment of ſo juſt and great a debt, Pſm. CXVI. 12.—CL. 6. He, therefore, that is inſenſible of the favors he hath received, or that being ſenſible of them, yet diſowns them either in word or deed, by not doing one good turn for another, or by returning evil for good; the ſame is an ungrateful man. This may ſerve for a deſcription of this vice, the baſeneſs whereof may be eaſily perceived, if we conſider it in the ſeveral following views.

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First, as a denial of a benefit received, and then it implies falſehood. For every ungrateful man denies the relation he bears to another, by ſpeaking or acting, as if he were not what he is, that is, a perſon obliged; or as if he, who had obliged him, were not what he is, that is, his benefactor. If, therefore, a man may, by his actions, affirm or deny any propoſition, as well as by his words, and this is univerſally allowed then he, that is an ungrateful, is alſo a falſe man.

Secondly.—We may conſider it in reſpect of the force or obligation of a benefit received, and then it will appear to be unjuſt. It is the voice of nature, that we ſhould do to others, as we would, they ſhould do to us; and, therefore he is unjuſt in aſking a favor, who never intends to do one When one man has conferred a benefit upon another, he always thinks, he has a good title to expect an equal benefit from the party obliged, whenever he may ſtand in need of his aſſiſtance. Why ſhould he not thus reaſon, when the other has been beforehand

hand with him in acts of beneficence? Juſtice is a conſtant and perpetual diſpoſition, or inclination to give every one his due. If, therefore, a reciprocal benefit is due to him, that hath been my benefactor, it follows plainly, that if I am ungrateful, I with-hold from him that, which is his due, and am unjuſt. But a reciprocal benefit is due to a benefactor upon the foot of merit, though not of legal and civil right, and he may reaſonably expect, though he cannot by the power of human laws exact, a return. It is the nature of beneficence to give without taking ſecurity for it. Beneficence, therefore, renounces all right to a demand, but not to an expectation of mutual beneficence — "The very cauſe of my conferring a kindneſs, ſaith a moral writer, is, that on my part I may demonſtrate, that what I beſtowed, did not proceed from a mercenary deſire of gain or advantage, but from humanity and good nature; ſince I required no caution or inſurance of being repaid; and, ſecondly, that on the part of the perſon obliged, I might afford him an opportunity of ſhewing himſelf grateful from an ingenuous principle, and not out of any apprehenſion of conſtraint."—Cicero argues well

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on this point: "Gratitude, ſaith he, is of all duties the moſt indiſpenſably neceſſary. If Heſiod bids us reſtore what we borrow, in a larger meaſure, if we can; what ought we to do, when we are, as it were, challenged by a prior obligation? Are we not in this caſe, to imitate the fruitful fields, which ſtill return more than they receive? For if we make no ſcruple to oblige thoſe, whom we hope to be the better for hereafter, how ſhould we behave ourſelves, towards ſuch, as we are the better for already? There are two ſorts of liberality, the one of beſtowing a benefit, the other of returning it. It is at our choice, whether we will give, or not give; but an honeſt man is not at liberty in point of making a return. So that though the generoſity of a benefactor may take from him all power of recovering what he hath given, yet it doth not, by any means, leſſen his right to expect, nor the other man's obligation to approve himſelf to his benefactor, by all good will and good ſervices."—Ingratitude, therefore, includes in it injuſtice, injuſtice of the worſt kind, that which defrauds its friend. To defraud my neighbour in the way of commerce, who perhaps thought to ſerve himſelf, when

when he ſerved me, is baſe and vile, but to deceive the juſt expectation of my friend, to make him a ſufferer for his good opinion of me, is much more diſingenuous. In caſes of injuſtice, the law will go a great way to enable a man to recover his right; but in caſes of ingratitude, whatever the benefactor gives, is utterly loſt, I might have ſaid, and much more; ſince it often happens, that by depending upon another's gratitude and honor; a man is defeated in his own juſt purſuits and aims, in which otherwiſe he might have poſſibly ſucceeded. But the ungrateful man is not only unjuſt to his friend and benefactor, but by diſcouraging generous acts of beneficence he is injurious to all mankind beſides. Other men ſuffer greatly by ſuch baſeneſs; the ungrateful man, therefore, is an enemy to ſociety, and conſequently to all mankind. Benefits are in their nature apt to unite the minds of men to each other; and for this reaſon, when a man hath expreſſed ſo much dependance upon me, as to confer a prior obligation, I am bound, at the leaſt, not to ſuffer him to be the worſe for his kindneſs to me; and I ought never to receive a good turn, but with a reſolution, if poſſible, to give

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my benefactor no reaſon to repent of what he hath done. If you take away the neceſſity of returning kindneſſes, where is the man, that would ſet the glorious example of being the firſt in doing them? Who would ſo far act againſt reaſon, as to part with his bounty, whilſt he knew it would be thrown away upon an unworthy perſon. And thus all beneficence, all mutual truſt and good will, would by this vice be baniſhed out of the world. There would be no ſuch thing as free help, or antecedent merit, no way of endearing or engaging one man to another; and the conſequence would be diſunion, a breaking of the very pillars of ſociety. Thus is the ungrateful man unjuſt to his benefactor, and violates a double obligation, that, which nature, and that, which merit lays upon him: He is alſo an enemy to ſociety, and injurious to all mankind, by diſcouraging beneficence, and defeating the excellent tendency and effects of it: Yea, and to himſelf too, for gratitude preſerves old friends, and gains new ones. A return of benefits received is the readieſt way to procure more, and in requiting one friend, we encourage many. Directly contrary to theſe are the effects of ingra-

titude. This compels every friend to depart. There never yet was a man ſo wicked, as not to approve gratitude, and deteſt ingratitude, as the two things in the world, the one the moſt to be abhorred, and the other the moſt eſteemed. The hiſtory of an ungrateful action puts us out of all patience, and gives us an abhorrence for the author of it. Thus it appears, that the ungrateful man is injurious to the benefactor, to ſociety in general, and to himſelf too. And may we not, with good reaſon, further ſay, that he is no leſs injurious even to God himſelf. For it may reaſonably be preſumed, that no man ever was truly grateful to the Univerſal, who could be ſo baſe, as to be ungrateful to a particular benefactor. No man was ever truly thankful to God for his benefits, who was unthankful to men for theirs; no more than he ever loved God, as he ought, whom he hath not ſeen, who loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen. He, therefore, that preacheth gratitude, pleads the cauſe both of God and man. For without it we can neither be ſociable nor religious, neither happy here nor hereafter.— To falſehood and injuſtice we may now add uncharitableneſs, as another of its companions:

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For what can be ſuppoſed to incline that man to be beneficent to others, i. e. to do a good turn, where he hath received none, who cannot be brought to do ſo, where he hath? Or how ſhould he be affected by a feeling of others' wants, that is not moved by a ſenſe of his own obligations? He, that ſympathizes with his neighbour in the pain he ſuffers, will never be the cauſe of it. And, therefore, he that is not cruel and incompaſſionate, can never be ungrateful. For neither winter winds, nor freezing ſkies, do bite ſo near, as benefits forgot. This ſentiment is finely expreſſed by the Pſalmiſt, "They rewarded me evil for good, to the great diſcomfort of my ſoul." Not only the experience, but the recollection of ingratitude alſo, raiſes a double indignation in the minds of thoſe, whoſe kindneſſes have been ill requited; the one, ariſing from a reflection upon the baſeneſs of the ungrateful perſon; the other, upon their own folly. Of this the ungrateful man, how ſtupid ſoever, cannot be entirely ignorant. And, therefore, his own heart will condemn him of cruelty, even to his benefactor. Hence it follows, that nothing can be more vain than to expect to find either

juſtice, or charity, or compaſſion, or indeed any other humane affection, abiding in him.—So true is that well-known aphoriſm, if you ſay a man is ungrateful, you ſay every thing, that is ill of him; you cannot poſſibly ſay worſe. Ingratitude is more criminal than revenge; for revenge is a return of evil for evil; and there is ſomething of provocation too, ſomething of a ſeeming equity in that: But the ungrateful man without the face of any ſuch pretence, without any provocation, returns evil for good. Envy is accounted a moſt unnatural vice, yet ingratitude is worſe. The envious man repines at the proſperity of his neighbour, who perhaps never did him good; but the ungrateful man is for deſtroying the happineſs of his benefactor and friend. We may conſider theſe two vices in theory as diſtinct and ſeparate, but indeed they are ſeldom found aſunder. And, therefore, ingratitude may be conſidered as a compound of both, which, to the baſeneſs of envy, adds that, which is peculiar to itſelf. You may go on to compare ingratitude with a thouſand other vices, and you will find it, in ſome reſpects,

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worſe than any of them, or them all. In ſhort, ingratitude is a contradiction to all the principles of honor, to every thing, that is juſt and good. It is a ſort of confederacy of falſehood againſt ſincerity and truth; of wrong againſt right; of injury againſt benefit; of malice againſt benevolence; of enmity againſt friendſhip; of cruelty againſt kindneſs; of Hell againſt Heaven. There are, there have been, and there ever will be, criminals of all ſorts; as thieves, robbers, and ſacrilegious perſons; adulterers, murderers, traitors, and tyrants; but there is hardly any notorious crime without a mixture of ingratitude.

No ſin ever attained to the higheſt climax of iniquity, till ingratitude was a conſtituent part of it. In a word, he hath no Chriſtianity, that hath no gratitude. For it is the ſpirit of Chriſtianity to dictate the return of good for evil; of ingratitude, the return of evil for good; and theſe two are contrary the one to the other. Though ingratitude therefore in the bare notion of it, does not imply a formal injury;

jury; as it is not the violation of any perfect civil right, nor a tranſgreſſion of any human law, yet it paſſes in the common cenſure of the world, for a vice more foul and more odious, than injuſtice itſelf.—For a man to ſhew himſelf unworthy of the candid opinion, which another entertained of his honor, and to be proof againſt benefits, is always accounted an argument of a moſt abject and degenerate ſoul.

As ingratitude is inhuman and unchriſtian, ſo it is peculiarly unnatural. Look through the whole Creation, and you will find a kind of circulation of benefits between the ſeveral conſtituent parts of it. Rivers return into the ſea, from whence they do originally come. The moon reflects the rays of borrowed light, which it cannot repay with others of its own. As the root of the tree nouriſhes the branches with its juices, ſo do theſe in gratitude form a ſhade to preſerve the root from being ſcorched by too much heat. The grave hereafter muſt reſtore, and it is only Ingratitude and Hell, that always receive, and never make return.

CONSIDER this vice next with reſpect to its cauſes, and it will appear to be ſuperlatively vile in that view. " It is the vice, ſaith Carteſius, in his Treatiſe of the paſſions of men, either madly proud, and vain, who imagine every thing to be due to their merit, or elſe extremely ſtupid, and ſo unable to conſider and return the benefits they received. Theſe are two of its cauſes, extravagant pride, or brutiſh ſtupidity, but chiefly the former. Pride is a vice, that makes a man think more highly of himſelf, and more meanly of others, than he ought to think. What he doth for others, is a mighty favor; what others do for him, is a debt and ſervice. It metamorphoſes friends and benefactors, into ſervants and debtors, and benefits into debts and duties. And, therefore, it is no wonder, if it be inſenſible under all kinds of obligation; and then how ſhould he make a ſuitable return, who thinks he hath received no favor, but his due? His pride makes him idolize himſelf, and every proud ungrateful man hath one property of an idol, that is, inſenſibility. But pride hath yet another way of in-

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fluencing the birth of ingratitude, though it be ſenſible of the favor done; for it cannot bear, that even a benefactor ſhould be well ſpoken of, and therefore it will vilify even its friend and patron, to exalt, though that be the moſt effectual way to bring reproach home upon itſelf. "It is more ſafe, ſaith Seneca, to affront ſome men, than to oblige them. The better a man deſerves of them, the worſe they will ſpeak of him; as if profeſſing an open hatred to their benefactors were a proof, that they lie under no obligations to them."—Covetouſneſs alſo hath ſometimes a ſhare in the production of ingratitude. This vice hath its hands always open, when it may receive, but ſhut when it ſhould repay; and, therefore, paſt obligations, ſhall yield to preſent intereſts, whenever they come into competition. Beſides theſe, ill-nature is aſſigned by moraliſts as a cauſe of ingratitude. The ill-natured man takes a ſecret pleaſure in the diſappointments, that befal his neighbour, and is, therefore, but too apt to be the author of them himſelf, which he can never be in a more pleaſing inſtance, than when he defeats the juſt expectation of his benefactor.

Ill-nature

Ill-nature is a quality, which confines a man wholly within himſelf, leaving him entirely void of that principle, which alone ſhould diſpoſe him to communicate and impart thoſe redundances of good, he is poſſeſſed of. No one ever goes ſharer with the ill-natured man; be he ever ſo full, he never runs over; but, like Gideon's Fleece, though filled and repleniſhed with the dew of Heaven himſelf, he leaves all dry and empty round him.—Now this is the very property of ingratitude alſo; theſe two, therefore, are ſo near of kin, that wherever you ſee ingratitude, you may as ſurely conclude, that there is a great ſtock of ill-nature in that breaſt, as you may certainly know, that man to have the plague, upon whom you ſee the diſtinguiſhing ſymptoms of that diſtemper.

LASTLY—Let us look into the Holy Scriptures, and ſee whether they do not expreſs the ſame ſenſe of the baſeneſs of this vice. The injuries we ſuffer from a reputed friend, are the moſt affecting and intolerable. It was not an open enemy, that hath done me this diſhonor, otherwiſe I could have borne it, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, but it was thou, my guide, my compa-

nion, and my own familiar friend. Then it follows, let death come haſtily upon them, and let them go down quick into Hell, for wickedneſs is in their dwellings and among them. Surely nothing but ingratitude could have extorted ſuch a bitter curſe. If we leave the Old Teſtament and ſearch the new, there we find the mercies of God magnified, from his extending the benefits of his common providence to the unthankful, as if they, of all others, were the moſt unworthy of them. This know, ſaith St. Paul, Tim. 2. chap. iii. ver. 1, 2, 3. That in the laſt days perilous times ſhall come. For men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, boaſters, proud, blaſphemers, diſobedient to parents, unthankful, or rather, according to the French tranſlation, ungrateful, unholy; without natural affection. Trucebreakers, falſe-accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe, that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God. Here you will eaſily learn the baſeneſs of ingratitude from the company it keeps, of which, and the reſt of its aſſociates, it is ſaid, that although they, who are guilty of them, may have the form of Godlineſs, yet they do deny the power thereof: From ſuch we

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are commanded, as it is our wiſdom, no leſs than our duty, to turn away.

And thus we proceed, from a conſideration of the baſeneſs of this vice, to the puniſhment of it. Every benevolent giver receives great delight from the comfort, which his gift brings to the receiver. He, therefore, that does good to another, does good to himſelf, not only in the conſequences, but alſo in the act itſelf.—And univerſally the conſcience of doing well is no inconſiderable reward. How much more the conſcience of having made a grateful return to a benefactor, which always affords a double pleaſure, that of the performance of a benevolent action, and that of the payment of a juſt debt, which it hath long wiſhed for an ability and opportunity to repay.—There is not a more pleaſing exerciſe to the mind of a generous man, than that of requiting favors received.—This is accompanied with ſuch a ſecret ſatisfaction, that, the duty is ſufficiently rewarded by the performance. Inſomuch, that were there no poſitive command enjoining it, nor any recompenſe laid up for it hereafter, a generous mind would practice it, for the ſake of the natural gratification, that accompanies it.

But it is not ſo with the ungrateful. He that rewardeth evil for good, evil ſhall not depart from his houſe. Upon theſe words one of the Commentators hath the following paraphraſe. The wickedneſs of the ungrateful man is not expiated in his own perſon, but deſcends upon his lateſt poſterity.—How far this interpretation may hold under the preſent diſpenſation I will not pretend to determine, but doubtleſs, if the poſterity of the ungrateful man, do not eſcape the evil effects of his ingratitude, much leſs ſhall he himſelf. The ſenſe of his own baſeneſs will perplex and diſtract him, whenever he calmly reflects upon it His ingratitude when it is diſcovered, will effectually terminate in the loſs of his friends, and the increaſe of his enemies: This we know by every day's experience. A man is not abſolutely ungrateful with impunity; he doth not betray without remorſe; nor is he ſo greedy of another's wealth, and ſo tenacious of his own, without ſome ſhame. But though you were never ſo compoſed within yourſelf, free from internal combats, and ſecret agitations, you are ſtill to account with the world, whoſe importunate reproaches, and troubleſome accuſations, you muſt be forced to endure.—Beſides all this, God himſelf

ſelf will ſurely recompence his ſin upon him. Thus, for inſtance, he dealt with the Jews in particular, puniſhing them with the greater ſeverity, becauſe their ſins had more of ingratitude in them, than the ſins of the Gentile World. "You only, have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore, I will puniſh you for all your iniquities." His ſlighted favors aggravated his wrath againſt them; and you all know how ſeverely the ingratitude of Judas was revenged upon him We have alſo a ſignal inſtance of ingratitude, as ſignally puniſhed, in Abimelech, and the men of Shechem, in the 8th and 9th of Judges, which you may read at your leaſure. In this inſtance, it pleaſed God to make thoſe, that were jointly concerned in the ingratitude, inſtruments of each others ruin. Thus, ſaith the hiſtorian, did God render the wickedneſs of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in ſlaying his ſeventy brethren, and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their own heads. Brutus's great zeal for the liberty of his country, could not, it ſeems, expiate his ingratitude. Thoſe words of Cæſar, "And you my ſon Brutus too," ſunk deep into his ſoul, and haunted him worſe than that evil ſpirit, of

which

which many hiſtorians have made mention, till he periſhed by his own hand, and by the ſame ſword, with which he had been aſſiſtant in the murder of his benefactor. If then, a man's own guilty conſcience will remind him of his ingratitude; if he loſes his friends and increaſes the number of his enemies thereby; if divine providence will, in great juſtice, caſt down evils upon him, will it not be next to a miracle, if evil ever depart from him? But be this as it may fall out, yet eternal vengeance will await him in the world to come. By the Roman or civil law, a parent might exclude an ungrateful ſon from any ſhare in his effects, real or perſonal; which otherwiſe might not be done; and for the like offence, a patron might bring back his freed-man to his former ſervitude again But in general, human laws take no cognizance of crimes of this nature, and, therefore, as the puniſhment of them is wholly remitted to the Divine Juſtice, it is more peculiarly the province of the Great Judge of the world, to execute vengeance upon them here, or if not here, of neceſſity hereafter.

FROM what hath been ſaid, theſe two conſequences ſeem naturally deducible; firſt, that a wiſe

a wiſe man will never enter into friendſhip with the ungrateful; becauſe ſuch friendſhip is both unprofitable and dangerous. It is caſting your pearls before ſwine, who perhaps will turn again and rend you; or, like warming into life, a ſtarved viper in your boſom, which, by that means, hath a fairer opportunity of ſtinging you to death.—Secondly, that a wiſe and good man, will be more careful to avoid the pollution and guilt of the ſin of ingratitude, than the ſociety of the ungrateful. The ungrateful man may hurt his neighbour's intereſt, or his fame, in the moſt ſenſible manner; but the ſin of ingratitude, will wound and deſtroy the very ſoul, and, without a deep and thorough repentance, end in everlaſting miſery and ſhame: More eſpecially thoſe flagrant inſtances of it, wherein this ſin of aggravated guilt is farther heightened by the greatneſs of the benefit conferred, or the relation, which the perſon conferring them bears to the ungrateful; as when a child ſhall be ungrateful to an affectionate and indulgent parent, to whom he can never make a recompenſe for things done for him; or as when a creature ſhall be ungrateful to his Creator, or he, that is redeemed, to him that hath redeemed him, to whom he

is ſtill much leſs able to make an equivalent, or indeed, any acceptable return, otherwiſe, than by promoting his glory, in which his own happineſs is included, by a chearful obedience to all his moſt juſt commands. If gratitude is due from man to man, how much more from man to his Maker? The Supreme Being doth not only confer upon us thoſe benefits, which proceed more immediately from his own hand; but even thoſe, which are conveyed to us by others. Every bleſſing we enjoy, by what means ſoever it may be derived upon us, is the gift of the great Author of good, and father of mercies. If gratitude, when exerciſed towards each other, naturally produces a very pleaſing ſenſation in the mind of a grateful man, it muſt exalt the ſoul into rapture, when it is employed on this great object, on this beneficent Being, who hath given us every thing we already poſſeſs, and from whom muſt deſcend every thing, we yet hope for—to whom, therefore, be rendered and aſcribed, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

SERMON IX.

Tim. 2, *Chap.* i, *latter Part Ver.* 10.—*And hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Goſpel.*

TO bring to light is either to diſcover, that which was before entirely unknown, or elſe to make a more full and clear diſcovery of that, which was known but obſcurely and in part. If, therefore, we ſhould admit, as ſome contend we ought, that the condition of mankind in a future ſtate was in any degree known before the coming of Chriſt; the doctrine contained in theſe words muſt be this: That the knowledge of the future ſtate of good

and bad men is more fully revealed, and its certainty eſtabliſhed on better evidence by the Goſpel, than it was before. The truth of this propoſition will be made evident by an enquiry into the ſtate of this knowledge, before the coming of Chriſt, as it is revealed to us in the Goſpel. And this enquiry will reſolve itſelf into two particulars, with reſpect firſt, to the body; and ſecondly to the ſoul. Now it is well known, that the Heathen had not the leaſt apprehenſion of the reſurrection of the body. And accordingly we find, that when the Athenians, the moſt learned of all the Gentile world, heard St. Paul ſpeak of the reſurrection, ſome mocked, and others ſaid, we will hear thee again of this matter; and this they did more from a principle of curioſity, being accuſtomed to ſpend their time in hearing or telling ſome new thing, than from any apprehenſion they had, that a doctrine ſo very ſtrange to them, could poſſibly be true. The ſame uſage he met with from the Epicurean and Stoic philoſophers; ſome of which ſaid, what will this babbler ſay? and others, he ſeemeth to be a ſetter forth of ſtrange Gods, becauſe he preached unto them Jeſus and the Reſurrection. Pythagoras taught

taught a tranſmigration of the ſame ſoul into different bodies. But one and the ſame ſoul cannot, at the ſame time, be united to many different bodies, and yet ſo it muſt be, according to the Pythagorean Hypotheſis, or there cannot be a general reſurrection. This Hypotheſis, therefore, is utterly inconſiſtent with with the doctrine of a reſurrection. Plato ſpeaks much of the immortality of the ſoul, but ſays nothing of the reſurrection of the body, though he treated of a ſubject ſo very nearly related to it, and, therefore, we may rationally preſume, that neither he nor any of the Heathen Philoſophers had the leaſt apprehenſion of any ſuch thing; and though the Jews had their reaſon improved by revelation, yet we find a conſiderable ſect amongſt them, poſitively declaring againſt this article. The Sadducees ſay, there is no reſurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit, i. e. no reſurrection of the body, no immortal ſpirit, nor ſoul of man ſubſiſting without the body. The Phariſees indeed, and they only of all mankind profeſſed a belief of the doctrine of the reſurrection. Such then were the notions both of Jews and Gentiles, concerning the condition of their future exiſtence in reference to the body.

The Phariſees believed, or at leaſt pretended to believe, that it would be raiſed again, but the reſt of mankind had either no idea of a reſurrection, or thought it a thing impoſſible.

Let us now ſee, what were the opinions of the Heathen, concerning the ſtate of the ſoul after death: And here it muſt be owned, that many of them, either by tradition or the light of nature, had conceived ſome faint apprehenſion of good things to be enjoyed, and evils to be ſuffered, after this life was ended; and this gave occaſion to the fictions of the poets, and reaſonings of the philoſophers relating to this matter. All which were built upon ſuch weak and fabulous grounds, that even the wiſer ſort were very little affected by them. Yea, Juvenal tells us, that the children, who are by nature credulous, and into whom ſuch principles are, for the moſt part, early infuſed, ſcarce believed them. That you may perceive how weak thoſe apprehenſions were, I ſhall give you a ſhort account of the arguments, on which they were founded: And, firſt, they alledged, that the ſoul's not being ſeen after death was no argument, that it did not exiſt in a ſeparate ſtate; for neither

ther did they infer its exiſtence from its viſibility, whilſt it continued united to the body; but from its operations, which they preſumed it did continue to exert in a ſeparate ſtate; judging it probable, that the conſcious fears of wicked men were injected into them by the departed ghoſts of thoſe they had injured; and demanding a reaſon, why ſo many ſhould conſent to offer ſacrifices to propitiate the dead, or pay any honors to the memory of ſuch, as had deſerved well of mankind; if after death they were utterly void of all ſenſe or perception. Again they thought it highly improbable, that the ſoul ſhould be the principle of life and motion, whilſt in the body, and yet be extinguiſhed, when freed from it; or that it ſhould be intelligent and rational, whilſt united to the body, which naturally is void of both thoſe powers, and yet loſe them, as ſoon as it was releaſed from that heavy clog. And, laſtly, becauſe the ſoul hath ſometimes ſupernatural flights in dreams, when the body is, as it were, laid aſide for a time, they thought it reaſonable to conclude, that when it was entirely diveſted of the body, it would be much more active and Godlike. Theſe and other arguments Xenophon

hath

hath collected in the ſpeech, which he ſuppoſes Cyrus to have made to his ſons, juſt before his death. And truly they are ſuch as make the ſeparate exiſtence of the ſoul not improbable; but are by no means ſufficient to convince good men of the certainty thereof, and much leſs the wicked, whoſe ſtrong deſires, that they may not exiſt hereafter, baffle even the evidence of a divine revelation. In ſhort, ſo little is it in the power of mere human reaſon to look into futurity, that it is no wonder, if this doctrine of the ſeparate exiſtence of the ſoul met with but few Proſelytes among the Heathen, and was entertained with much diſtruſt by them; and accordingly we find from the cloſe of Xenophon's diſcourſe, that he himſelf had but little dependance upon his own proofs, or rather probabilities; for he afterwards repreſents Cyrus, as ſaying, that poſſibly it might be otherwiſe, and his ſoul, notwithſtanding all he had ſaid, might die together with the body. But Socrates's arguments are much magnified, as ſtrongly evincing the ſoul's ſeparate exiſtence; let us take a ſhort view of ſuch of them as deſerve our attention. The two chief arguments, which are aſcribed to him, are theſe which follow:

FIRST,

FIRST, that an earneſt deſire of knowledge is natural to the mind of man; but man can never attain to any great degree of knowledge here in this life, his body being a clog, and an obſtacle to his enquiries; perfect knowledge, therefore, is reſerved as the peculiar privilege of the life to come. This is an argument of more weight with me, than all that were alledged by other Heathen writers on this ſubject. For it ſeems inconſiſtent with the natural notions we have of God, that he ſhould endue the ſoul of man with an almoſt infatiable deſire after knowledge, and yet cut it ſhort in the very beginning of its enquiries. But, ſecondly, the ſtrongeſt argument of all is yet behind, and is as follows:—The opinion of the ſoul's mortality doth not well agree with the ideas we have of the goodneſs of God; for upon a ſuppoſition, that the ſoul is mortal, virtue would be finally prejudicial to good men, and vice beneficial to the wicked; which cannot be imagined. For if there were but one inſtance of unfortunate virtue and proſperous wickedneſs in the world, of which there are many, it would be ſufficient to prove the certainty of a future ſtate; becauſe God cannot be unjuſt or unreaſonable

unreaſonable in any one inſtance. Of neceſſity, therefore, there muſt be another life, wherein the good ſhall be rewarded, and the wicked puniſhed; into which the ſoul being immortal muſt carry along with it its good and evil habits, its virtues and its vices, the ſprings from which, in ſome degree, its eternal happineſs or miſery muſt flow.

THIS argument is ſo ſtrong and rational, that one would be apt to think, they would have given a full aſſent of the mind to this great truth upon the evidence thereof. But Socrates himſelf, after all his reaſonings, confeſſeth his doubt, whether there were any thing after death or nothing; and that moſt men diſbelieved this article, which was ſcarcely credited by the philoſophers themſelves. Cicero ſtyles the hope of a future exiſtence only a ſort of ſurmiſe of future ages; and Seneca, though he took great delight in reading what had been written on the ſubject, ſaith, it is that which their wiſe men rather promiſed, than proved. Socrates's own words plainly ſhew his doubts: I hope, ſaith he, to go hence to good men; but of that I am not very confident, nor doth it become any man

man to be too poſitive; that ſo it will be; I muſt now die, and you ſhall live: But which of us is in the better ſtate, the living or the dead, God only knows. It would be endleſs to quote all the authorities proper on this occaſion. Conſult the Pagan Poets and Philoſophers, as long as your patience will endure; and you will find many of them peremptorily affirming, that death removes all our evils, as leaving no farther place for joy or ſorrow, hope or fear; and that neither ſoul nor body hath any more ſenſe after death, than before the man was born; the reſt of them will always be found in ſuſpence, not knowing, whether their ſouls ſhall be extinguiſhed, or only change their place, in a ſtate of ſenſibility, or inſenſibility. I ſhall therefore only add one paſſage more out of Cicero, which I the rather do, becauſe by a ſort of prophecy, he declares, that this great truth could never be certainly known without a revelation, as St. Paul hath affirmed, that it was brought to light by revelation only. This author begins his diſcourſe upon the ſubject with an honeſt profeſſion, that he intended to deliver nothing upon it as fixed and certain, but only as probable, and then having reckoned up

the different ſentiments of the Philoſophers, he concludes, which of theſe opinions is true, ſome God muſt tell us. And after he had confirmed, as far as he was able, the doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, he ingenuouſly confeſſes, that his opinion was contradicted, not only by great numbers of the ſect of Epicurus, but alſo by the moſt learned of other ſects; great reaſon then had mankind before the appearing of the Sun of righteouſneſs, to be in bondage through the fear of death all their life long; for, notwithſtanding all the philoſophers have ſaid, as they were in doubt themſelves, they muſt neceſſarily have left the reſt of mankind in equal doubt, which is next to leaving them in deſpair; for as all their arguments amounted to bare probabilities only, they were by no means ſufficient to remove the doubts, or ſuſtain the hopes of good men, nor yet to alarm the fears of evil and wicked men, to reſtrain their preſumption, or prevent their miſery; and, conſequently, ſuch a glimmering light would have been of little benefit to mankind, or ſervice to the intereſts of religion. As to the ſentiments of the Jews, concerning this matter, I have already ſhewn, that the Sadducees did not

not believe, that the ſoul of any man ſubſiſted without a body: They believed neither Angel nor Spirit. Their own hiſtorian informs us, that they poſitively affirmed, that the ſouls of men were annihilated at their death. The Phariſees, who were orthodox, touching the reſurrection of the body, were yet in a groſs error as to the condition of the ſoul in its future ſtate: For though they taught, that the ſouls of wicked men, at their death, preſently departed into everlaſting puniſhment, yet, according to their doctrines, the ſouls of good men tranſmigrated or paſſed into other human bodies. And to this opinion we muſt aſcribe the different conjectures of the Jews, concerning the perſon of our Saviour; ſome ſaying, that he was John the Baptiſt, others that he was Elias, and others Jeremias; Matt xvi. 14. As if the body of Chriſt had been animated by the ſpirit of one of the three. And here it will naturally occur to your own reflection, that the Phariſees held two different opinions, concerning the ſtate of the dead, viz. The reſurrection of the body, and the tranſmigration of the ſoul, which directly overthrow each other, as hath been before obſerved. It muſt be con-

ſeſſed indeed, that a little before, and in the time of the captivity, it pleaſed God to vouchſafe unto the Jews an imperfect diſcovery of the reſurrection, that they might not fall into the idolatry of the nations, amongſt whom they ſojourned; imperfect, I ſay, for even the Prophecy of Daniel, which is the cleareſt of all others, ſpeaks only of many riſing at a certain time, but not expreſſly of all. His words are: Many, that ſleep in the duſt of the earth, ſhall awake; ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt. As if God had deſignedly reſerved the full revelation of this great truth, unto the meſſenger of the covenant, who hath brought life and immortality to light through the Goſpel. And thus we proceed to the ſecond propoſition, viz.

To enquire briefly into the account, which the Goſpel gives us of man's condition after death. And here you will find as much light and certainty, as doubts and darkneſs in the former ſearch. Here we are taught, that the ſoul actually doth exiſt after its ſeparation; that the ſoul of a good man is tranſlated immediately

diately into a place of reſt and happineſs, where it actually is with Chriſt, and ſhall be ever with him; where it enjoys the beatific viſion of God; where with the aſſembly of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and with choirs of holy Angels, it ſings eternal ſongs of praiſe unto God the Father, and the Lamb, that ſitteth upon the throne. And on the contrary, that the ſouls of wicked men are immediately carried by evil ſpirits into the bottomleſs abyſs, into the place of torments, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where they have no ſociety, but that of fiends, and reprobate ſpirits, like themſelves: Where they have no intermiſſion of their pain, labouring under the heavy wrath of an offended God, in the depth of miſery and deſpair.

And, laſtly, here we are taught, that God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man, whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead; on which day there ſhall be a reſurrection both of the juſt and unjuſt; the

grave

grave giving up her dead, and the ſea, her ſlain. When each body ſhall undergo the ſame fate with the ſoul, to which it appertains: And that theſe things ſhall moſt certainly be, we have the ſure word of God to atteſt, of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. And whatever objections may be raiſed againſt the poſſibility of a reſurrection from the diſperſion of the ſcattered atoms of a diſſolved body, or the fancied tranſmutation of the conſtituent parts of one body into thoſe of another, or any other topic of the like kind, they muſt needs vaniſh, when it is conſidered, that the ſame Being of infinite veracity, who hath aſſured us, that ſo it ſhall be, is a Being of infinite knowledge, from whom no ſecret thing can be hid, and alſo of infinite power, ſo that nothing poſſible to be done can, in any wiſe, be difficult to him. He, who firſt made the body, can certainly reſtore it. He, who died for us, cannot want will to ſave us; and he, who raiſed up himſelf, cannot want power to raiſe his followers. Let not then the men of reaſon any longer look upon it as a thing incredible, that God ſhould raiſe the dead. The evidence in this caſe is ſufficient to engage the aſſent of

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every attentive and unprejudiced mind. Let him, that is not ſatisfied with it, ſhew us how a better could be given, if he can? In ſhort, this certainly is the beſt evidence, which the nature of the ſubject will admit of. For what greater aſſurance of a future event can poſſibly be given, than a divine revelation, eſpecially when it is confirmed by the reſurrection of Chriſt, the evidence and pledge not only of a general reſurrection, but alſo of a judgment to come? As, therefore, the Scriptures are the word of God, who cannot lie nor repent, we may be ſure, that every man ſhall receive both in ſoul and body, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. For as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what good things God hath prepared for them, that love him; ſo neither conſequently, by parity of reaſon, can we conceive, what puniſhment he hath prepared for thoſe, that deſpiſe him. I come now to the inferences, that may be naturally deduced from the foregoing propoſitions From what hath been ſaid, we are provided with an eaſy anſwer to a popular objection againſt the truth of revelation. God, ſay

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the modern free-thinkers, never makes uſe of extraordinary means in effecting his purpoſes, where the ordinary ones are ſufficient. We, therefore conclude, that God never made any revelation of his will to men, becauſe the human reaſon was ſufficient to have formed a perfect ſyſtem of morality without it. Upon this laſt poſition the whole force of this objection depends; if that be faulty, the ſuperſtructure falls. Now we know, that for four thouſand years, the human reaſon did not find out any ſuch perfect ſyſtem of morality, and may we not conclude, that what it had not diſcovered in ſo long a ſpace of time, it never would? The exigencies of ſociety indeed, had led mankind into the knowledge of the rules of juſtice, but thoſe of temperance and chaſtity the philoſophers themſelves notoriouſly tranſgreſſed, without remorſe or ſhame. They indulged themſelves in the practice of ſuch abominations, as it would be a ſhame to mention. And pray what think you of their Polytheiſm and abominable Idolatries, which in every country almoſt, were enforced by law? Do not theſe things prove what St. John hath ſaid, viz. That at the time of our Saviour's coming, the whole world

world lay in wickedneſs; and that, as St. Paul ſpeaks, God had given them over to ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lie? Well, but now they have received the benefit of that light, that lighteneth the Gentiles, they can form a ſyſtem of morality. The Philiſtines plough with the Heifer, ſhe expounds the riddle, and then they boaſt, as if themſelves had found it out. In this behaviour they diſcover an equal mixture of ingratitude and pride, and have unwittingly ſupplied us with a juſt anſwer to another of their doughty objections, viz. That if a revelation was neceſſary, why was it ſo long delayed? Not ſo long as they pretend, had it been properly attended to. It pleaſed God to make himſelf known to mankind by the works of Creation, by the communication of his will and gracious intentions towards mankind, to the Patriarchs and the Prophets, by the extraordinary interpoſition of his providential diſpoſitions, to the people of the Jews, by their bondage in Egypt, and captivity in Aſſyria, and by their miraculous deliverance from both. Or if we grant their ſuppoſition, yet it may be aſſigned as one good reaſon, that it was ſo long delayed in order to have prevented this

ingratitude and vanity, with which they are chargeable; that the wiſe man ſhould not glory in his wiſdom, but in the Lord, that teacheth man knowledge. Add to this, that without a revelation of future rewards and puniſhments, of which we have ſhewn, they neither had, nor could have had, any certain knowledge; their moral ſyſtems, for want of a ſufficient ſanction and ſupport, would have been uſeleſs and inſignificant, and the whole world would have continued immerſed in their uncleanneſs, their groſs ſuperſtitions and idolatries to this very day; without hope, and without God in the world. But we muſt not dwell too long upon this point. There are other more practical inferences deducible from the diſcourſe, to which I would gladly engage your attention.

You have ſeen how the world ſat in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death, before the Sun of Righteouſneſs appeared; and, on the contrary, how gracious God hath been to us, who live under the Goſpel Diſpenſation, in calling us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. So ſtrongly was the apprehenſion of a future ſtate impreſſed upon the minds of the Heathen by the

the light of nature, that ſometimes they would proceed in the paths of virtue, in the ſtrength of their hope and immortality; and at other times ſit down in diffidence and deſpair. Their attempts to find out the truth, were rational and commendable, though it ſeems, it lay beyond the ken of human reaſon. Their notions and reaſonings about this matter may afford us, to whom it hath pleaſed Almighty God to unveil the hidden myſtery, a ſort of pleaſure mixed with pity, like that of a father, when he ſees the endeavours of his child, who hath attempted ſomething manly and beyond his age, defeated. You have ſeen how the Heathen ſought, and ſought in vain; in what perplexity they were betwixt hopes and fears of what might lie beyond the grave, ſomewhat like benighted travellers, apprehenſive, that if they miſtook their road, they were undone; yet amidſt a great variety, that offered themſelves to their choice, not knowing which to chooſe. What would you not give to obtain a friendly guide in ſuch perplexity. Behold then the Son of God deſcending from his Father's boſom to reſolve your doubts, and put away your fears; directing your feet into the right path, when it

was next to an impoſſibility, but you ſhould otherwiſe have gone aſtray, and been for ever loſt; leading you, as it were, by the hand up to the ſame Heaven, from which he deſcended, and into which he is aſcended, there to appear in the preſence of God for us. How juſtly then may we take up our Saviour's parable, and ſay, Bleſſed are our eyes, for they ſee; and our ears, for they hear; for, verily I ſay unto you, that many Prophets and righteous men have deſired to ſee thoſe things, which we ſee; and have not ſeen them; and to hear thoſe things, which we hear, and have not heard them. If then God hath been ſo particularly gracious to us, who live under the Goſpel Diſpenſation, certainly there is a peculiar obligation upon us to make ſuitable returns for the manifold mercies we have received from him, and particularly for this of bringing life and immortality to light by the Goſpel. That the Heathen led ſuch looſe and wicked lives is to be aſcribed to their ignorance and uncertainty in reſpect of their future ſtate. And indeed there cannot be a greater encouragement to vice, or diſcouragement to virtue, than a perſuaſion, that we ſhall not hereafter be called to account;

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and that there is neither puniſhment nor reward to be expected, when this life is ended. Nay, the very doubting, whether theſe things be ſo, as we have repreſented them, is enough to make the world degenerate into all manner of vice and wickedneſs. What is there to reſtrain a wicked man from committing iniquity with greedineſs here, when he is once perſuaded, that he hath nothing to ſuffer for it hereafter? And what is there to ſupport a good man in the ſteady purſuit of virtue, when he finds, that for all his ſufferings here, he cannot expect any future recompence? The articles, therefore, of the ſoul's exiſtence after death, and the reſurrection of the body, as the greater ſpurs to virtue, and moſt powerful reſtraints from vice, are of the laſt importance to ſociety in general, as well as to each particular man; forasmuch as without a competent knowledge of theſe things, mankind would be apt to run, as it were hoodwinked, into all manner of wickedneſs, and at the laſt into eternal ruin. All conſiderations prove, that we are infinitely indebted to the goodneſs and mercy of God, in ſending his only Son into the world to bring life and immortality to light through the Goſpel.

pel. Do you then believe the Holy Scriptures to be the word of God, and God to be a being of infinite veracity, knowledge, power, and juſtice; then you muſt alſo believe the certainty of the ſoul's ſeparate exiſtence in happineſs or miſery, and of the reſurrection of the bodies of the juſt and unjuſt; and if you do, it will be the moſt fooliſh and inconſiderate thing in the world, to be continually purveying for your well being in a temporal, whilſt you neglect to make the leaſt proviſion for it, in an eternal ſtate. Suppoſe that, after the reſurrection of the body, it was to continue in happineſs or miſery only ſo long as it had lived upon the earth, our future intereſts would ſurely deſerve an equal regard; becauſe as the happineſs of another ſtate is ineffable, ſo is the miſery of the reprobate intolerable. But when on the contrary we are aſſured, that it is to continue for ever, are we not barbarous to ourſelves, when we ſuffer the concerns of this life to eat up all our care, yea, and ſacrifice that future eternal happineſs, to a periſhing enjoyment? What if there were but an uncertain chance for theſe things, yet who would not be a candidate for everlaſting happineſs, or who would

would run the riſque of being involved in everlaſting miſery and ſhame? Some indeed there are, that comfort themſelves with a fond conceit of annihilation; and it muſt be the greateſt wonder in the world, that any thinking man ſhould find comfort in ſuch a low conceit.— Nature recoils at the very notion; to be as if we had never been, to be reduced to a little heap of ſenſeleſs duſt, in what an ignoble light doth that ſet mankind, the maſterpiece of the creation? How doth it level him with the beaſts that periſh? To be indued with ſenſe and reaſon for a few years to ſee imperfectly the beauty and wiſdom of the works of God, and then to lie down in an eternal inſenſibility; to be one minute happy in the knowledge of God and the enjoyment of his bleſſings, and the next a mere nothing; what but an exiſtence in everlaſting miſery can be more dreadful? Seneca ſpeaks of ſome in his days, that were more afraid of Annihilation than of Hell itſelf. The fictions of the Poets concerning the latter, poſſibly they may have not believed, and therefore they could not but believe the former. What remains then, but that we earneſtly contend for the dignity of our nature, as beings deſigned to ſurvive the grave, and

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jointly beſeech almighty God to give us grace ſteadfaſtly to believe, and always to live; as thoſe, that do believe theſe great and fundamental articles of our faith, viz. the reſurrection of the body and the life everlaſting, always remembering, that to whom much is given, of him much will be required; and ſhewing, by an uniform obedience to the will of God, the grateful ſenſe we have of his mercy to us, in bringing life and immortality to light through the Goſpel of his Son, to whom be aſcribed Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON X.

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Matt. x. *Ver.* 28.—*Fear not them, which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul; but rather fear him, who, when he hath killed the Body, is able to deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell.*

IN this Chapter we have an account of our Saviour's ſending forth his Diſciples to preach the Goſpel, and ingenuouſly acquainting them with the evil treatment, they ſhould meet with in the faithful diſcharge of their duty. That they ſhould be ſcourged in the ſynagogues, delivered up to councils, and into priſons, brought before kings and governors, perſecuted

from city to city, and hated of all men for his name ſake.—Having thus alarmed their fears, it was neceſſary, that he ſhould offer ſomething of great weight to fortify their minds againſt thoſe fears; and this he doth in the words of the text. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul, but rather fear him, who, when he hath killed the body, is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in Hell.—As if he had ſaid, the enemies you are to encounter, and the evils you are to endure in publiſhing the Goſpel, are terrible indeed, but not ſo terrible, as the wrath of an offended God, to which you will render yourſelves obnoxious, if you deny me before men, and I in return deny you before my Father, which is in Heaven. The rage and malice of men can only affect the body, but God's diſpleaſure can pierce the ſoul, and perpetuate the miſery both of ſoul and body to all eternity. Therefore it will be your wiſdom faithfully to preach and publiſh the glad tidings of ſalvation, and to endure to the end, that ye may eſcape the wrath of God, how much ſoever ye may be hated and perſecuted by men. By the circumſtances and connexion of this caution, it appears to have been

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ſuggeſted by our Saviour to his Diſciples, as the ſtrongeſt reſtraint from ſin, and moſt powerful motive to obedience. That it may be ſuch to us, by being clearly apprehended and firmly believed, I propoſe in the following diſcourſe,

FIRST.—To prove that man is compounded of two diſtinct parts, ſoul and body.

SECONDLY.—That the ſoul ſurvives the body, and is immortal.

THIRDLY.—That the body ſhall, at the Day of Judgment, be raiſed again, and united to the ſoul, eternally to ſhare one common fate with it.

FOURTHLY—That that eternal ſtate will be happy or miſerable according to the quality of our actions here on earth.

THE firſt propoſition is proved, firſt from the different powers and actions, which we obſerve to be in us, or done by us; as from dimenſion, figure, gravitation and the like, we

infer a proper ſubject to which they belong, which we call body; ſo from the different powers of ſenſation, perception, judgment, remembrance, liberty and conſcience, we, with equal certainty, infer a different ſubject to which they belong, to which we give the name of ſoul or ſpirit. Now if from thoſe, which we call corporeal properties, we infer the exiſtence of the body, I ſee no reaſon why from the conſideration of powers and properties, far ſuperior to thoſe eſſential to bodies, we ſhould not infer the exiſtence of a being far ſuperior to the body. It is very improbable, that ſuch different powers and properties ſhould belong to one and the ſame ſubject; and this the rather becauſe thoſe, which we attribute to the ſoul, are neither eſſential to matter in general, nor to a human body in particular.— For though the body remains entire after death, yet all thoſe powers are in that ſtate utterly fled and gone. As theſe intellectual powers are not eſſential to matter, ſo neither can they be produced in matter by art or motion. It follows, therefore, that theſe intellectual faculties do either belong to the ſoul, a being diſtinct from and ſuperior to the body; or elſe that the body

is endued with them by ſome ſuperior being, in whom thoſe powers do exiſt in infinite perfection. Now that the former ſuppoſition is the true one, we may infer from the different pleaſures and pains, which we cannot but obſerve to be in us. The body is oft in pain, when the mind is calm and eaſy, and the mind greatly oppreſſed, when the body is in perfect health and eaſe. If there be not a ſpiritual principle within us, it will be hard to ſhew how it comes to paſs, that ſome men ſhould take more pleaſure in ſearching after truth and knowledge, than others do in the moſt voluptuous enjoyment of ſenſual objects: That the intellectual faculties ſhould prevail over the ſenſual, and ſtick ſo cloſe to contemplation, as thereby to weaken the body and exhauſt the ſpirits: That the intellectual faculties ſhould often be ſo ſtrong, when the body is ſo weak, the underſtanding as clear, the memory as extenſive, when the body is juſt mouldering into duſt, as if it were in perfect health. How it comes to paſs that in all unlawful gratifications ſomething within us ſhould always be reluctant and uneaſy. But if no rational account can be given of theſe things, without the ſuppoſition

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of a ſpiritual ſoul within us; then what imaginable account can be given of thoſe rejoicings, which the Martyrs of old expreſſed under the moſt exquiſite pain and torture? For, although a natural ſtupidity may very much abate the ſenſe of pain, and an obſtinate reſolution ſuppreſs complaint, yet not only to bear the croſs, but to embrace it, not only to be patient but triumphant upon the rack, ſhews that there is ſomething within us of an high extraction, the pleaſures or pains of which are ſufficient, in ſome meaſure, to ſuppreſs the ſenſe of all corporeal pains or pleaſures.

To ſtrengthen theſe arguments, I might appeal to you, if it would not much pexplex ſuch, as are of a contrary opinion, to tell us what it is that, when all the external ſenſes are locked up in ſleep, is ſometimes ſo buſy as even to outdo itſelf, when the body is awake, in the ranges and flights of its imagination. But our laſt and beſt appeal muſt be to God himſelf: Whoſe exiſtence is equally proved, whether you ſuppoſe a ſpiritual ſoul within us, or that the body is endued with theſe powers, by a Being, in whom they do exiſt in the higheſt perfection.

perfection. If then the nature of the thing ſhews that he hath not endued the body with thoſe powers, and he himſelf no where declares he hath, but the contrary; we ought to be determined by revelation, which ſpeaks of the ſoul and body, as two diſtinct conſtituent parts of man. I could mention a great many texts of Scripture, that undeniably prove my propoſition, but it ſhall ſuffice me at this time to obſerve, that the whole force of the text, reſts upon the ſuppoſition of the ſoul's being a part of us diſtinct from the body. For otherwiſe he that kills the body, will at the ſame inſtant deſtroy them both; and the argument would employ a manifeſt abſurdity. It remains, therefore, that the ſoul and body are diſtinct parts of us, and then it will follow, that the latter may periſh or be deſtroyed, and yet the former ſurvive and ſubſiſt, and this brings us to the

SECOND propoſition, that the ſoul or ſpiritual part of man, doth ſurvive the death of the body and is immortal: And this is proved by many arguments. As, firſt, from the activity and energy of the ſoul in thoſe operations, to which the body contributes little or nothing.

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In the operations of the mind, whilſt the body is at reſt, ſaith a learned writer, there is a certain vaſtneſs of conception very ſuitable to the capacity and demonſtrative of the force of that divine part of our compoſition, which can never die. I need not inſiſt longer on this argument, becauſe all thoſe which prove the ſoul to be a diſtinct conſtituent part of man, do alſo ſtrongly infer its exiſtence after death. For a ſecond argument for the ſoul's immortality, is the antiquity and univerſality of the opinion, that it is immortal. There is nothing in which the learned have differed more than in their diſputes concerning the firſt author of this opinion, ſome aſcribing it to one ancient philoſopher, ſome to another. The true reaſon of which diſputes can be no other but this: viz. That it was too early in the world to have any other author but God and nature. The general conſent of mankind in this opinion proves the ſame thing. The wiſeſt of all nations have always agreed in the belief of the ſoul's ſubſiſtence after death. What Seneca and Cicero have ſaid in their writings on this ſubject, is pertinent to our purpoſe. The former reaſoning about the eternity of the ſoul, ſays, That he hath

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the general perſuaſion on his ſide, that in death nothing falls away but the body which is a compoſition of frailty, expoſed to diſeaſes, accidents, perſecution and tyranny; but that the ſoul, which is of divine original, being obnoxious neither to old age, diſeaſe, accident nor death, when it is once freed from the heavy chains of the body, returns to its kindred ſtars and native Heaven. This he affirms to be the general opinion of mankind, an argument of great weight with him for the truth of it.—The latter lays it down as a ſort of moral axiom, that the conſent of all nations with reſpect to ſuch things as we are not taught, or led into by the reaſonings or ſuggeſtions of other men, is to be accounted the voice of nature, that of this kind is the doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, the belief of which is viſible in the concern, that all men expreſs about what ſhall happen to them after death. It is true indeed, there have been in all ages ſome, who have pretended to deny, that there is any future ſtate. But theſe are few, bearing no proportion to the bulk of mankind; neither can we ſay, that they did really believe, what they profeſſed. Their wicked lives will give us

reaſon to think, that they rather ſpoke their wiſhes than their faith. Or if they did, yet every one knows, how eaſily we are brought to believe, what we wiſh to be true; and how difficult it is for a mind depraved, and clouded with the ſteams of vice and brutal luſts, to find the truth. An Heathen writer hath very well accounted for theſe monſters in morality, and ſhewn the weakneſs of their arguments, as well as the ſandy foundations on which their hopes are built. If conſcience, ſays he, awaken in a bad man a ſenſe of his evil deeds, which tortures his mind, and puts him in fear of puniſhment in Hell, his only remedy is to fly to non-exiſtence, ſo curing one evil with another, ſupporting himſelf in his wickedneſs by the deſtruction of his ſoul; which he will not have to be immortal, that he may not ſubſiſt to ſuffer the puniſhment he deſerves. He gives ſentence upon himſelf, that after death he ſhall be nothing, only to avoid the penalties of a future judgment. But as through want of counſel he was drawn into ſin, ſo through ignorance of the reaſon of things, he paſſes a wrong judgment on himſelf; for the judges of ſpirits departed, framing their ſentence according to the

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rules of truth and juſtice, do not think it meet, that the ſoul ſhould be annihilated. Upon theſe authorities we conclude, that if the general conſent of mankind be the voice of nature, and a good argument for the truth of any opinion, then it will follow that the ſoul is immortal.

THIRDLY. Another argument for the immortality of the ſoul is drawn from the nature of the ſoul itſelf. Now in the ſoul we may conſider its faculties and its paſſions. In reſpect of the former it is capable of perpetual improvement. The more we do, the more we may underſtand and know; the ſoul never coming to a ſtand in her accompliſhments. How then can it enter into the thoughts of man, that that part of him, which is capable of making new improvements to eternity, ſhould fall away and be reduced to nothing, almoſt as ſoon as it begins to exiſt? How can we imagine that a creature, endued with thought and reaſon, eternally capable of making new diſcoveries into the infinite goodneſs, wiſdom and power of God, and of receiving freſh delight from every ſuch diſcovery, muſt periſh at her firſt ſetting out,

and in the very beginning of her enquiries? Hath God given us ſuch abilities in vain, ſuch talents to be employed ſo little, and during ſo ſhort a period, as that of human life only, and capacities never to be filled? A brute creature arrives at its utmoſt perfection, and hath all the endowments it is capable of in a very few years; and, therefore, it is not ſurpriſing, that ſuch animals, as can finiſh their buſineſs in a very ſhort time, and were made only for the uſe of man, ſhould die and be no more: But that man, whoſe faculties are of ſuch a vaſt capacity, ſhould be ſent into the world only to look about him for a while, and then to be as if he had never been; that ſo noble a creature ſhould be made for ſo mean a purpoſe; who can make this conſiſtent with the infinite wiſdom of the great Builder of the univerſe? It cannot be, that God ſhould delight himſelf in ſuch abortive intelligences, ſuch ſhort lived rational beings. We ſhall never find that wiſdom in the formation of man, which ſhines forth in all the other works of God, without looking on this world only as a nurſery for the next, and believing that the ſeveral generations of men, which riſe up and diſappear by ſuch quick ſucceſſions, are

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only to receive their firſt rudiments of exiſtence here, and afterwards to be tranſplanted to a more friendly climate, where they may ſpread and flouriſh to all eternity. Theſe are the words of a writer of great repute: I will cloſe this argument with thoſe of another not much leſs eſteemed, What is this life, ſaith he, but a circulation of little mean actions? We lie down and riſe again, eat and wax hungry, work or play, and then we lie down again, and the circle returns. Are not the capacities of men deſigned for higher purpoſes than theſe; and ought not our ambition and expectation to fly at higher game? Let us then be adventurers for eternity. It is at leaſt a fair and noble chance, and beſides, there is nothing in this world worthy our thoughts or our paſſions. If we ſhould be diſappointed, we are in no worſe a condition, than our fellow mortals; but if we ſucceed in our expectations, we are eternally happy. If in the next place we conſider the paſſions of the ſoul, the ſame concluſion naturally follows. I ſhall confine myſelf chiefly to the natural deſires and fears of the human mind: As for its deſires, it is known by every one's experience, that nothing in this world can adequately fill them.

them. The mere natural man is always diſſatisfied with his preſent condition, and always endeavouring to make ſome alteration in it, as he hopes, for the better, and yet when it is made, he is uſually as little ſatisfied as before. One would imagine that they who have the greateſt opportunities of gratifying every ſenſual appetite, ſhould be perfectly eaſy in theſe enjoyments. But experience ſhews the contrary. They range like bees from flower to flower, but how ſoon, alas! are all the ſweets, they find in them extracted? That which they deſire, ſoon grows flat and inſipid, when obtained; and ſomething ſtill is wanting.— For this reaſon they are ſtill preſſing forward from one deſign to another, expecting after many diſappointments to find what they never did nor ever ſhall, viz. true and adequate happineſs in the enjoyment of earthly things. What now can be the reaſon, that worldly objects ſhew fairer at a diſtance than they prove to be, when poſſeſſed? What but this, that they bear no proportion to the extent of human deſires. The mind of man being of a ſpiritual and heavenly nature can never hope to receive full ſatisfaction for ſuch things. And the deſign of providence in

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giving us ſuch extenſive deſires is to prevent us from pitching our tents on this ſide that land of promiſe, in which alone we ſhall be put into the poſſeſſion of ſuch objects, as will compleatly fill the vaſt deſires of the human ſoul. But God hath not only ordained that no earthly thing ſhould compleatly fill our deſires and appetites, and fitted us for a ſtate of immortality, but he hath alſo implanted in us a formal deſire of that very ſtate, and certain longing after it. It being the common appetite of all men to deſire to be happy, in the poſſeſſion of the ſupreme Good, and that, for ever. If therefore we may reaſon with any certainty, as in natural things from effects to their reſpective efficient cauſes, ſo in moral from effects to final cauſes: If we ſuppoſe that God acted with any deſign in giving us thoſe capacities, and planting in the ſoul ſuch extenſive deſires; If we ſuppoſe that God, of whoſe wiſdom and goodneſs, we have large experience every moment of our lives, did not deſign to lead us into vain expectations, we muſt conclude, that our ſouls are to ſurvive the grave and live for ever. As the natural deſires of the ſoul point out its duration, ſo alſo do its fears. Every one knows that wicked men are often haunted with

fears

fears of the puniſhment due to their crimes in a future ſtate; and that theſe fears are apt to trouble their minds in ſuch inſtances, as human laws can take no cognizance of; that they are general and deeply riveted in the mind, and operate ſo ſtrongly as often to force ſuch offenders to a diſcovery of ſecrets fatal to themſelves. It is therefore highly probable, that ſuch fears are not to be imputed to the prejudices of education, or ſuperſtition, or melancholy, but to the natural ſuggeſtions of conſcience, and the original frame of the mind, and then the ſame conſequence follows as before. Beſides theſe fears, God hath impreſſed upon the mind a formal dread of annihilation. It is the hope of future happineſs, that enables us to bear with patience, injuries, pains, and loſſes, and to ſubmit to the ſtroke of death with a willing and contented mind. But if we had reaſon to believe, that death would make a final end both of body and ſoul, the very apprehenſion of ſuch an utter extinction would perpetually give us the moſt intenſe pain. We ſhould be in bondage through the fear of death all our life time, and leave the world with the deepeſt horror. Laſtly the juſtice of God as well as his wiſdom and goodneſs

neſs require a future ſtate of reward or puniſhment. How otherwiſe ſhall we account for the proſperity and impunity of many wicked, and the ſufferings of many good and virtuous men, of which we ſee frequent inſtances every day. How ſhall we account for all thoſe intricacies of providence, which Ezekiel repreſents by a wheel within a wheel, as things not to be accounted for, without the ſuppoſition of a day of future retribution. Thus it appears upon the principles of reaſon, that God, on whoſe decrees the duration of every created being depends, hath deſigned us for a ſtate of immortality. For what ſtronger arguments can be required in a matter of this nature, than that he hath qualified the ſoul for it, made it capable of receiving ſuch a vaſt acceſſion of felicity, and adapted our minds to the perception of an infinite variety of pleaſures not to be found in this world; and alſo implanted in them a ſtrong deſire of immortality and future happineſs, and an equal averſion to annihilation and dread of future miſery, which, if there were no future ſtate, would argue the Almighty rather cruelly wanton than wiſe and good in the formation of man. What reaſon thus evinces, you, who

have free acceſs to revelation, will find abundantly confirmed therein. I ſhall not therefore ſpend the time in collecting ſuch paſſages as fully prove this point: Nor is it neceſſary for me to inſiſt upon the proof of the two laſt propoſitions, viz. That the body ſhall be raiſed to life and united to the ſoul, to co-exiſt with it in everlaſting happineſs or miſery, according to the deeds done in the body. Reaſon dictates that it is more meet, that joint partners in the actions done, ſhould be ſuch in the reward or puniſhment due to them. But the Scripture, which is our beſt guide, aſſerts them, both in the plaineſt terms, and tells us, that there ſhall be a reſurrection both of the juſt and unjuſt, and that we muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. And thus I proceed to the application.

And, firſt, When we reflect upon the dignity of our nature, and conſider that God hath made our ſouls images of himſelf, the rock of ages; if our love of him does not excite in us raptures of wonder and gratitude, we are inſenſible

ſible of the ineſtimable benefit. Lord, what is man! that thou ſhouldſt thus regard him; that thou haſt made him, but little lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honor and immortality. He, that will not lead a godly life here, to be for ever happy hereafter, is unaccountably ſtupid and unwiſe. God might have made us, like beaſts that periſh, to have walked about a while on the earth, with only a ſhadow of ſenſe, and ſo to have returned to inſenſibility again, and then to have been unmindful of our Maker, had been owing to the weakneſs of our capacities. But to be endowed with ſuch vaſt capacities and high privileges, this calls for a behaviour ſuitable to the dignity of our nature. And if this be wanting, that eternal duration, which was deſigned for the baſis of our everlaſting happineſs, will be inſtead of the greateſt bleſſing, the greateſt curſe; and thoſe faculties, which God had graciouſly deſigned to be ſo many qualifications for felicity and reward, will be the inſtruments of pain and puniſhment.

But, ſecondly, as our ſouls are immortal, and are deſigned to live for ever, we ought cer-

tainly to be at greater pains to make provision for an eternal, than a temporal existence. Since our spirits must be given back to God, it highly concerns us to keep them always in a condition fit for his acceptance. This is a work of the last importance, if we consider, what the soul is or whither it is going. The soul is in its own nature of more value than the whole material world; and it is going to receive a sentence that will make it eternally happy or miserable. If it leaves the body polluted with the lusts of the flesh, and the stains of sin, God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, will abhor it. If we have not banished envy, hatred, and malice, and every ill-natured passion, out of our souls, how shall we expect that God, who is a Being of infinite goodness, will receive them into his favor and protection? God is good and just and true, and therefore, if we be cruel, false and fradulent, he will command us as workers of iniquity, to depart from him. For if we hope to see him as he is, we must purify ourselves as he is pure.

LASTLY, if not only the soul is to survive the grave, but the body also to be raised again

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and united to it eternally, to ſhare one common fate; if the favor of God will make them both happy, and his diſpleaſure miſerable, then ſurely nothing ought to be more deſired than the one or dreaded than the other. It is our duty and our wiſdom, moſt highly to reverence that Being, who can and will give us the greateſt good, if we be not wanting to ourſelves; and above all things to fear him, that hath the greateſt power, and will inflict the greateſt evils upon us, if we are ſo bold as to offend and diſobey him. The greateſt danger is from the greateſt power; and, therefore, he is moſt to be feared, to whom the greateſt power belongs. God is therefore the chief object of our fear, ſince all other powers are limited by his Almighty power. Human malice cannot extend its rage beyond the grave, nor further on this ſide of it, than God is pleaſed to permit. But no one knoweth the power his anger hath — For what can ſcreen the ſoul from his diſpleaſure? Or who can eſtimate the weight of his indignation or limit its duration? As, therefore, you regard the happineſs both of ſoul and body; as much more conſiderable as eternity is than time; ſo much ſtronger influence let the

fear

fear of God have upon you than all other terrors; even though they ſhould extend to the deprivation of life itſelf; for in that caſe it will be your higheſt wiſdom not to be afraid of them, that kill the body, and after that have no more, that they can do, but rather to fear him, who, after he hath killed the body, is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in Hell.—Fear him then, and ye will have nothing elſe to fear. Fear to offend him, and ye ſhall be the objects of his love, and he of yours; for as his Majeſty is, ſo is his mercy; and as his power, ſo likewiſe is his goodneſs infinite.—To him, therefore, be aſcribed Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON XI.

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Matt. xvi. *ver.* 26. *What is a Man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole World and loſe his own Soul, or what ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

HE that hath converſed, though but little, with the World, muſt doubtleſs have obſerved the extraordinary care moſt men take not to be ſo impoſed upon in their dealings with each other, as not to receive an equivalent for what they give. It is much to be wiſhed, that this care were extended beyond our temporal to our ſpiritual concerns, and that men would ſeriouſly conſider, for what very trifles they

they give away their precious and immortal ſouls, which will ſubſiſt, when this world ſhall be no more.

Our bleſſed Saviour in the foregoing part of this chapter, had begun to correct the falſe notions and vain expectations, his Diſciples had entertained of a temporal kingdom, and of earthly power and grandeur; and plainly told them, that he muſt ſuffer a ſhameful and a painful death, not obſcurely hinting to them the ſame thing concerning themſelves; that however they, who would be his Diſciples, muſt determine with themſelves to take up their croſs and follow him: But leſt this diſcovery ſhould be unto them a ſtumbling block or rock of offence, he tells them further, that whoſoever was determined to loſe his life for his ſake and the Goſpel's, ſhould ſave it, and whoſoever would chuſe to ſave his life by his infidelity or apoſtacy, ſhould loſe it; which words had a very remarkable completion with reſpect to this life, at the time of the dreadful deſtruction of Jeruſalem, ſuch as believed in Chriſt, and retired from that devoted city, owing their ſafety to their faith, as others did

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their deſtruction to their unbelief. But that theſe words may contain an univerſal truth, equally concerning all, to whom his Goſpel ſhould be preached, as they moſt certainly do, they muſt refer to another life; and this is plain from what is added in the next verſe, where it is ſaid, that the Son of Man ſhall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels, and then ſhall he reward every man according to his works; and the meaning of them is this, That they who ſhould believe in Chriſt, and lay down their lives in atteſtation to the truth of his Goſpel, ſhould ſave them, i. e. ſhould have an eternal life of happineſs hereafter conferred upon them, in recompence for their ſufferings here, and be of the number of thoſe, of whom it is ſaid, that they never die; becauſe to ſuch natural death is the beginning of eternal life; but on the contrary, they, who by denying Chriſt, ſhould endeavour to evade the malice of their perſecutors, or but deſigned ſo to do; though perhaps they were never put to the trial, ſhould loſe their lives, i. e. they ſhould ſuffer the loſs both of body and ſoul; which is truly, becauſe it is eternally, to die.

HAVING thus informed his Diſciples of the conſequences of being faithful or unfaithful, in the diſcharge of the duties of their miſſion, and in them all mankind, of the conſequences of believing or not believing in him, and of obeying or not obeying the laws of his Goſpel, he wiſhes them to conſider in the words of the text, which was the better choice, "What is a man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?" plainly intimating that his loſs is infinite, who loſes his ſoul, whatever elſe he gains; and conſequently his folly ſuch as words cannot expreſs.

To convince you of the truth of the aſſertion implied in this queſtion, it will be neceſſary to enquire,

FIRST, What may be meant by the gain of the whole world.

SECONDLY, What by the loſs of the ſoul: And then,

THIRDLY, To make a computation of his loſs, who gains the world, but loſes his ſoul.

BY

By the world then we may underſtand this earthly globe, on which we dwell; and to conceive what is meant by the gain of it, we may ſuppoſe the ſeveral countries thereof united in one univerſal empire, and ſome one man ſeated in the throne of that empire, with an abſolute power over the wills of other men; and ſo ſufficiently gratified as to his ambition, furniſhed with all kinds of objects neceſſary to the gratification of every ſenſual appetite, and ſo under no neceſſity of any ſelf-denial; and alſo poſſeſſed of ſuch immenſe treaſures, as are ſufficient to ſatisfy the luſt of the moſt avaricious eye: Such a man as this will, in St. John's notion, have gained the whole world; for as he ſaith, all that is in the world, is either the luſt of the fleſh, i. e. pleaſure; the luſt of the eye, that is, riches; or the pride of life, that is, honor. And no doubt, he that hath all theſe things at his command, will be thought by many to be a happy mortal indeed. To have all nations tributary to himſelf, to be the monarch of the whole earth, do what he pleaſes with the lives and fortunes of other men, to have more wealth than can poſſibly be conſumed, and full liberty to gratify all his appe-

tites, as he himſelf ſhould pleaſe. What poſſible addition could be made to ſuch a man's felicity? To this I anſwer, leſt we ſhould be miſtaken by viewing only the outſide of ſuch a man's condition; that, as for riches, a man can truly be ſaid to have poſſeſſed only ſo much of them, as he hath enjoyed, the reſt being another man's reverſion: That to exerciſe dominion over the wills of other men, is a very troubleſome and often times dangerous employment, unleſs we ſuppoſe them, what they are but ſeldom found to be, very tame and ſubmiſſive: That indulgence in ſenſual pleaſures, by ſubjecting reaſon to luſt and appetite, utterly deſtroys a man's liberty: That honors, which are but other men's opinions of us, cannot juſtly authorize us to entertain a better opinion of ourſelves, than we might have without them; that no man properly appeals to other men's ſentiments to form a judgment of himſelf; and that titles yield but a very empty ſatisfaction, ſince the man, who bears them, knows himſelf to be but the ſame thing, he was before his new titles were conferred. But not to depreciate too much the things, which the generality of mankind admire, let us ſuppoſe this

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imaginary monarch to have a certain aſſurance of continuing undiſturbed in his enjoyments all his life long; and alſo to live and reign as long as other men generally do; and then, I conceive, the condition of ſuch a man may ſerve, in ſome ſort, to repreſent to us the gain of the world, which implies a power to gratify without interruption every luſt of concupiſcence, avarice, or ambition; every natural or even fantaſtical deſire, without any other apprehenſions of a change by death or otherwiſe, than ſuch as are common to him, with the reſt of mankind.

Secondly.—Our next enquiry is, What is implied in the loſs of the ſoul: And, firſt, I obſerve, that by the loſs of the ſoul we are not to underſtand the annihilation of it. The ſpirit of a man doth not return with the body to the duſt; but to God, who gave it, to be diſpoſed of according to its deſert. If the annihilation of the ſoul were the ſame thing with the loſs of it, then the Epicurean's advice, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; let us even ſatiate ourſelves with the pleaſures of ſenſe, ſo long as the proper faculties remain,

would

would be an unexceptionable rule of human conduct. Our Saviour tells us, that he, who hateth not his own life, cannot be his Diſciple; but if the ſoul did not exiſt after death, moſt certainly he would be the wiſeſt man, that did all he could to ſave his life, let religion enjoin, promiſe or threaten what it would. In this caſe for a man to loſe his life, would be the wildeſt abſurdity in nature, whatſoever the motive might be. But the loſs of the ſoul is not the annihilation of it, it is the excluſion of it from the joys of Heaven, from the converſation of Saints and Angels, from the beatific viſion of God; all which are to the bleſſed, perpetual ſprings of ſuch pleaſure, as no mortal man ever yet was able to form a juſt conception of.

WHAT Heaven is, or what the joys of it are, we cannot know, until this veil of mortality is removed, and we admitted into it; but this we know, that if a land flowing with milk and honey; if Paradiſe, where the earth brings forth her fruits without the labourer's toil; if a place, where there is no more ſorrowing, and where all tears are wiped away; if ſuch a ſtate,

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where every one poſſeſſes all things, can convey to our minds deſireable ideas; then Heaven muſt be a place of happineſs, infinitely ſuperior to what this world affords, which will compleatly fill all our capacities, though infinitely improved and enlarged, and gratify all our rational deſires to all eternity.

But further yet, this excluſion from happineſs is not the whole of that which is implied in the loſs of the ſoul; for if it be caſt out of Heaven, it will be thruſt down to Hell: There is a pain of ſenſe going along with this loſs. They that barter away faith and a good conſcience for the gain of this world, will find in the next, that they did in effect exchange happineſs for torments; the enlivening rays of the divine Mercy and Glory for unquenchable flames; the ſociety of Saints and Angels, for that of Fiends and Devils; and the peace, beauty and harmony of Heaven for the tumults, horrors and confuſions of Hell. Add to all this, the conſideration of that deſpair, which will ariſe from an aſſurance, that their condition will be endleſs, as it is intolerable; and alſo of that remorſe, which is beſt repreſented by

by a worm, that never dies, and a fire that never ſhall be quenched; and this may ſuffice for the ſecond enquiry.

THIRDLY. We now proceed to the computation of his loſs, who gains the world, but loſes his ſoul, underſtanding by the former, a power of gratifying every deſire from the preſent moment, to the end of life, which power we may ſuppoſe him to have gained by laying himſelf under no reſtraints from religion, or rather by breaking through them all, and by the latter, the puniſhment of ſuch wickedneſs, endleſs, uninterrupted happineſs loſt, and miſery without eaſe or end incurred: And in this compariſon we ſhall find ſuch a ſuperlative degree of folly, that you would think it impoſſible, any rational creature ſhould be guilty of it, did not the profaneneſs, injuſtice, intemperance and open wickedneſs of many profeſſed Chriſtians, afford us too many inſtances of ſuch wretched folly.

AND, firſt, let us compare the pleaſures of ſin which are gained, with the joys of Heaven, which

which are loſt, in reſpect of their moment or degree: But in this reſpect, there is no more competition between them, than between the happineſs of a Saint, and that of a brute; between a frail, material, mortal, corruptible body, and an immaterial, immortal and incorruptible ſpirit. The pleaſures of ſin and ſenſe are impure, imperfect, violent, tranſitory, purſued with upbraidings of conſcience, and remembered with remorſe: Whereas the joys of Heaven are pure, perfect, ſerene, everlaſting; and, therefore, every wiſe man will chearfully forego the former, for the future enjoyment of the latter, and ſubmit to a preſent loſs, for a future greater gain. This we do every day almoſt in our temporal, why not in our ſpiritual concerns. But if he be unwiſe, that will not give up a preſent enjoyment for one, that is greater in reverſion; moſt certainly he is ſtill moſt ſtupid, who rather than deny himſelf for the preſent in matters of little moment, will bring upon himſelf intolerable and endleſs miſery, loſe more and greater pleaſures, and incur more and greater pains in reverſion, than any, that are to be enjoyed or ſuffered here.

SECONDLY, we may compare the gain of the world and the loſs of the ſoul, in reſpect of their dependence upon ſin, and connexion with it; and thence farther illuſtrate the folly of that man, who thinks to gain the world by the loſs of his ſoul. And here we obſerve, that he who makes uſe of unlawful means, to gain his ends, is not always ſure of ſucceſs. A wicked man is oft betrayed by his own devices: Honeſty, diligence, ſobriety and truth, are much ſurer methods of gaining wealth, power, reputation or pleaſure, than the contrary vices, which generally are very deſtructive of the temporal happineſs of the man, that makes uſe of them; and which will be ſure to bring eternal miſery upon him, whether he ſucceeds in his expectations or not. For it is not the proſperous ſinner only, on whom God will take vengeance: Succeſs makes a wicked action neither better nor worſe. Now if we ſuppoſe, that a man breaking through all laws both divine and human, doth not gain that, which he propoſed to himſelf by ſo doing; then becauſe he was before juſtly to be condemned of folly, even though he had been ſure of ſucceſs, you will certainly account him more unwiſe for pul-

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ling down certain damnation upon himſelf by wicked ſchemes and meaſures, the event of which was uncertain; and which in the iſſue did prove deſtructive of that very happineſs, at which he aimed. And truly, this is a very common caſe; for religion doth not prohibit us the enjoyment of any true pleaſure, nor the acquiſition of any lawful gain.

VIRTUE and honeſty generally make men happy; as, on the contrary, vice and villainy, according to their natural tendency, make them miſerable even in this life. Let it be ſuppoſed however, that a wicked man doth proſper in his ways; yet how can he be aſſured, that he could not have been altogether as proſperous with honeſty and innocence; and if he could, he hath loſt his ſoul for nought, which is ſtill a further aggravation of his folly.

BUT ſuppoſe the account we have given of the loſs of the ſoul, were only a bare poſſibility, though nothing can be more eaſily proved, than the certainty thereof; I ſay ſuppoſe that eternal ſtate, which we have deſcribed, and the rewards and puniſhments of another life, which

God hath appointed, as the ſanctions of his laws, and plainly revealed in the Goſpel of his Son, to be conſidered but in bare poſſibility; even ſo they are of weight enough to determine the choice of any prudent man againſt all the pleaſures to be enjoyed or pains to be endured in this life: And that theſe things are poſſible no Atheiſt can, or ever did deny. But he that will allow exquiſite and endleſs happineſs to be but the poſſible conſequence of a life well ſpent; and the contrary ſtate, the poſſible conſequence of vice and wickedneſs; that man certainly judges very much amiſs, who doth not conclude, that a virtuous life, with a well grounded expectation of everlaſting happineſs, is to be preferred to a vicious one with the fear of that dreadful ſtate of miſery, which it is very probable may overtake the guilty, or at the beſt, with the terrible uncertain hope of annihilation; and this is evidently ſo, though a virtuous life were attended with conſtant pain, and a vicious one with a continual pleaſure, which yet is for the moſt part quite otherwiſe, as was before obſerved: But be that as it may fall out, when ſenſual pleaſure is laid in one ſcale, and the infinite happineſs propoſed to ſelf-denial, and

infinite

infinite miſery denounced againſt ſinful indulgence, in the other, it is eaſy to ſee, which ought to preponderate. If the worſt, that can come to the good man, if he be miſtaken, be the beſt, that the wicked man can attain unto, if he be in the right; who, without madneſs, would run the venture? Who, in his wits, would loſe his chance for infinite happineſs, or chuſe to come within a poſſibility of infinite miſery, which if he eſcapes, there is nothing to be got by the hazard? If the good man be in the right, he is eternally happy; if he be miſtaken, he is not miſerable; becauſe he is never ſenſible of his miſtake: But on the contrary ſide, if the wicked be in the right, he is not happy; if he be miſtaken, he is eternally miſerable: Muſt it not, therefore, be a moſt manifeſt wrong judgment, that doth not ſee, to which conduct in this caſe the preference is to be given? And, therefore, I may very juſtly thus confirm the former inference:—If he be extravagantly fooliſh and unwiſe, that gains the world by the loſs of his ſoul, ſuppoſing the loſs of the ſoul to be a thing barely poſſible, the probability and certainty of ſuch a loſs in conſequence of ſin, muſt make the folly thereof ſtill more and more extravagant. But,

But, thirdly, we may compare the pleaſures, profits or honors, which are gained in this world; and the miſeries, in which the wicked are involved by ſin in another, in reſpect of their duration. But indeed in this reſpect, they are not only unworthy, but incapable of compariſon; for there is no proportion between finite and infinite; thoſe are temporal, theſe eternal; thoſe are ended, almoſt as ſoon as begun; theſe always increaſing. The ſoul being immortal, its happineſs or miſery muſt be laſting, as its own immortality. There is a proportion betwixt a drop from a bucket and the waters of the ocean, betwixt a grain of ſand and the globe of the earth, which numbers will expreſs; but betwixt time and eternity there is none: Eternity ſcorns all calculation. What then is the life of man, that it ſhould be compared, and much leſs that uncertain part of it, which yet remains? Perhaps when, like the rich man in the Goſpel, we have got our granaries well filled, and we begin to ſay to our ſouls, Take your eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry? That night they are required; and then whoſe are the riches, pleaſures or honors, for which we bartered away our innocence and eternal happineſs,

happineſs, and involved ourſelves in endleſs miſery? Go to now, ſaith St. James, ye that ſay, to-day or to-morrow we will go to ſuch a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and ſell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.

If it were propoſed to our choice, whether we would be miſerable for an hundred millions of years, and ever after happy; or happy for the ſame time, and miſerable for ever after; a little thought would ſoon determine, whether of the two would be the better choice; becauſe what is future will be preſent, and ſuch a number of years, how great ſoever, bears no proportion to eternity: Eternity grows not old, but is ſtill new and ſtill beginning. But when that, which is really propoſed to our choice, is this, viz. whether we will be deluded by a mere ſhadow of happineſs for fifty, forty, twenty or ten years, I might ſay for a day or an hour, and for that be miſerable for ever; or, on the contrary, deny ourſelves the gratification of ſome brutal, irrational and criminal luſt,

luſt, and for that be rewarded with eternal happineſs; no words can expreſs the extravagance of that man's folly, or the extremity of his loſs, who in ſuch a caſe makes a wrong choice: If he ſuffers the loſs of this world to ſave his ſoul, that loſs will be abundantly recompenced by the ſalvation of his ſoul. Infinite happineſs will infinitely overpay us for all the pains we take in the duties of religion; for all the reſtrictions we lay ourſelves under, for the ſake of a good conſcience; for all the evils we ſuffer for holding faſt our faith firm unto the end; becauſe all theſe afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But the loſs of the ſoul can never be repaired. What ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul? How gladly would he then give, that which he gained by the loſs of it? Yea, ten thouſand times as much, if he had it to give. But neither the world nor any part of it now are his: He hath not power now over ſo much as a drop of water to cool his tongue: But if he had the whole world in poſſeſſion, yet that cannot redeem the ſoul from death, temporal and eternal; for we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold;

gold; but with the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a Lamb without blemiſh, and without ſpot.

If the world could make a man immortal, or purchaſe our releaſe from the grave and pit of deſtruction; then it would be adviſeable by any means to gain the world, even all to ourſelves; but if the good things of this world, can neither prevent nor remove diſeaſe or pain from the body, nor ſooth the wounded ſpirit to reſt; much leſs will they prevail with the deſtroying Angel, to paſs over our houſes, ſtay judgment or execution, prevent the loſs of the ſoul, or ranſom it when loſt. See then the helpleſs trifles, at which we value our immortal ſouls, and for which we expoſe them to be eternally loſt.

Well might the Son of God put men upon enquiring what was the mighty gain, for which their ſouls were ſo vilely caſt away. The world is too low a price for the ſoul. He, that loſes his ſoul, loſes himſelf; and whatever elſe he gains, his loſs is infinite, endleſs, irreparable,

and to make ſuch an exchange is an act of folly not to be paralleled; of madneſs and phrenſy, moſt wild and moſt extravagant: So juſt is the obſervation of the wiſe man, The fooliſhneſs of fools is folly, that is, according to the Hebrew phraſe, Wickedneſs, which is Folly, is the moſt extravagant folly in the world, it is the fooliſhneſs even of fools. In a word, it is exchanging ſubſtance for ſhadow, certainty for chance, and eternity for time; or in other words, ſubſtantial, certain, eternal happineſs for temporal, caſual vanities, yea, for everlaſting torments. Experience, if we look not well to our ways, will be a ſenſible, but withal a dreadful conviction of the truth of this aſſertion.

To conclude, be adviſed frequently, and ſeriouſly to recollect what has now been ſuggeſted to your thoughts. This, if any thing can, will induce you carefully to ſeek thoſe things, that belong to your future peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes; to work out your ſalvation with fear and trembling; to uſe all diligence to make your calling

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and election ſure; and to watch over your ſouls, as thoſe, that muſt give an account to him, that is appointed to be the judge of the quick and dead: To whom, with God the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be rendered and aſcribed, as is moſt due, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON XII.

Prov. iii. *Ver.* 16 *and* 17.—*Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honor.*

Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.

NOTHING obſtructs the intereſts of Religion more than the miſapprehenſions of ſome, and the miſrepreſentations of others, concerning its nature and effects. The covetous man is greatly diſcouraged by being told, that he muſt clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give

give the thirſty drink, and, in a word, be ready to relieve the various wants of his indigent neighbours, if he would hope to be ſet on God's right hand, and hear that joyful ſentence, Come ye bleſſed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The proud and ambitious are no leſs offended, by being told that God reſiſteth the proud; that he, that exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed. The voluptuary is ever ſecretly murmuring againſt thoſe reſtraints, touch not, taſte not; and hearing of the neceſſity of crucifying the fleſh with the affections and luſts, he falſely judges, or perhaps is made to believe, that if he ſubmits to the diſcipline of Religion and Virtue, he muſt bid an eternal adieu to his beloved pleaſures. Thus is Religion rendered unamiable, either through our own miſtakes, or the miſrepreſentations of others, and too often rejected to the inevitable ruin of thoſe, whoſe minds are thus rendered impaſſive to the voice of wiſdom, charm ſhe never ſo wiſely. How then ſhall we promote the intereſts of Religion more effectually than by proving the truth of the wiſe man's aſſertion in the text? viz. That length of days is in her

right

right hand, and in her left riches and honor. That her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.—By the wiſdom, here ſpoken of, Religion is to be underſtood, and by this emblematic repreſentation of it, under the image of a Queen, with bleſſings in both her hands, is intimated to us that health, wealth, honor, pleaſure and peace, the principal ingredients of human happineſs in the judgment of the men of this world, are the proper effects of that wiſdom, which conſiſts in being truly religious. And this is that complex propoſition, the truth of which I propoſe to prove at this time, with reſpect to the three firſt of theſe temporal bleſſings only.

And, firſt, we ſay, that the religious man does beſt provide for the preſervation and continuance of his health. Length of day is in her right hand.

To this bleſſing the pre-eminence is juſtly given; becauſe it is the greateſt of all temporal bleſſings, that, without which a man cannot enjoy himſelf, much leſs, any thing external to

to him. What is the harmony of concerts to an aching ear? What are the moſt exquiſite dainties to a ſickly appetite? What will riches avail the poſſeſſor, when languiſhing under ſome painful diſtemper? Or what abatement of their pain, under like circumſtances, can the honorable and the noble expect to receive from the high titles, by which they are addreſſed? Health then is a neceſſary pre-requiſite to the enjoyment of any temporal bleſſing. And that Religion and Virtue do greatly contribute to the preſervation of health, no rational man can doubt. Under the law long life, health and proſperity, were promiſed to obedience, and the contrary evils denounced againſt diſobedience; and we may not doubt, but that the general conduct of Providence is the ſame under the Goſpel, as under the Law. Even now, we are aſſured, that Godlineſs is profitable to all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and alſo of that which is to come. So far, therefore, as theſe things do depend upon the providence of God, it is Religion that entitles a man to the friendly interpoſitions of his good providence in the preſervation of his life and health; as on the contrary, it is

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irreligion and ungodlineſs that do deprive us of the benefit of his watchful care; yea, often provoke him to puniſh us with divers diſeaſes and ſundry kinds of death. He, therefore, that is deſirous to be healthful, and that his days may be prolonged, muſt carefully avoid every vice, and practice every virtue, that he may be entitled to the promiſed bleſſing. This is the language of the Holy Scriptures, and to thoſe that give due credit to theſe ſcriptures, as to the word of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, this is a ſufficient proof of the truth of this part of the propoſition; and to thoſe, that do not, it is eaſily demonſtrated by other kinds of evidence taken from the nature of the thing. For beſides the external cauſes of injury to the body, all which are under the direction of providence, there are two general internal ones, which oft cut ſhort the thread of human life. Theſe are the inordinate paſſions of the ſoul and appetites of the body.

Every one knows, that the paſſions of the ſoul do very much affect the body; and the more impetuous they are, the more violently do they diſcompoſe the whole man. Grey hairs have

have been the effect of exceſſive ſorrow within the compaſs of a ſingle night, and ecſtacy of joy hath ſometimes immediately burſt the bands of human life aſunder. But theſe are not the only paſſions, that have a power to deſtroy. Envy is a ſlow conſumption, it is the rottenneſs of the bones: Anger puts a man upon many raſh and inconſiderate actions, which often terminate in wounds and death: And who can count the numbers that have periſhed by their own ambition? Injuſtice, which is the common effect of avarice or ambition, hath ſlain its thouſands; and intemperance and lewdneſs, the common effects of the inordinate appetites of the body, their ten thouſands. That theſe are great and terrible deſtroyers, I need not ſtay to prove, but may ſafely reſt your conviction upon an appeal to general experience, and probably to your own. It would be no eaſy matter to mention any one vice, that hath not, directly or indirectly, a tendency to deſtroy the health or life of man: But the limits cuſtom hath preſcribed to theſe diſcourſes will not permit me to enter into a farther examination of particular vices, to ſhew their evil tendency, or to point out inſtances, wherein they have had their natural, but moſt terrible effects.

HENCE it follows, that Religion is the beſt preſervative of health. This effectually curbs the exceſs of paſſion, and always keeps the ſoul calm and quiet. It commands us to be patient and forgiving, meek and lowly, aſſuring us, that by this means we ſhall find reſt to our ſouls. It utterly extirpates ambition and avarice (by enjoining contentment and acquieſcence in that ſtate of life, in which the providence of God hath placed us) and envy, by infuſing a ſpirit of univerſal benevolence, which teaches us to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep —It leſſens our affections for the things of this world, by directing us to fix them on the things above; and ſo prevents the violent exceſſes either of joy or ſorrow: And in like manner, it as effectually prevents thoſe immoderate indulgences of the ſenſual appetites, which we have before obſerved to be ſo very deſtructive, by requiring us, under the penalty of eternal damnation, which no wiſe man will be tempted to incur, to keep our bodies in temperance, ſoberneſs and chaſtity, by allowing no more indulgence to thoſe appetites, than is conſiſtent with the health of the body; never making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof:

thereof: Nor for thoſe many deſtructive diſeaſes which are the ſure attendants on exceſs. "Labour and coarſe fare, ſaith a judicious Writer, protract the lives of the poor, whilſt the rich, diſſolved in eaſe and luxury, (the temptations to which, they have not always the wiſdom to reſiſt) ſeldom live out half their days: And it is Religion only, which, by introducing temperance and moderation into the dwellings of the wealthy, brings along with it health and long life, which otherwiſe would be ſeldom found but in the cottages of the poor."

THUS does religion prohibit every vice, and enjoin every virtue: The former are deſtructive, the latter (for there are no diſeaſes incident to virtue) do manifeſtly tend, directly or indirectly, to the preſervation of the health and life of man; and this double influence of Religion, clearly evinces the truth of the wiſe man's aſſertion, That length of days is in her right hand.

AND thus we proceed to ſhew, ſecondly, that Religion contributes much to make men

truly rich. As there are none abſolutely good, ſo there are none abſolutely rich, ſave one, that is, God, who is infinitely removed from all want or indigence by the fulneſs of his own perfections, and hath of us, or our's, no need. Riches, therefore, as applied to all created beings, muſt be a relative term, ſuppoſing natural indigence and a competent ſupply. He, whoſe revenues, how great ſoever they be, are leſs than his expences, which he either cannot, or will not abridge, is, or ſoon will be, poor: and on the contrary, he, whoſe income exceeds his out-goings, how ſmall ſoever it be, if he be but content and thankful, is really and properly rich. And thus, as the widow's mite exceeded the benefactions of the wealthy, ſo the contented peaſant may be richer than the prince. And I doubt not, but that in the judgment of truth and wiſdom, he, who wanted nothing, though he had nothing, whoſe own hands ſupplied his daily wants, was more truly rich than that monarch, who being maſter of many nations and kingdoms, was yet impatiently graſping at as many more. Nature is content with a few things, its real wants are eaſily ſupplied, and opulence more certainly

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ſprings from limited deſires than extended poſſeſſions; Godlineſs with contentment being the greateſt gain. From this enquiry into the proper notion of riches this propoſition reſults; viz. that Religion contributes much to the acquiſition of a competency of the good things of this life, and to make a man contented and ſatisfied with that condition which providence hath allotted him, and conſequently rich.—The truth of this propoſition is eaſily proved. For Religion enjoins induſtry, ſobriety and frugality, by which eſtates are naturally both acquired and preſerved. The hand of the diligent maketh rich; and many, that have not been able to make any great acquiſitions of their own, have yet grown rich by the frugal management of the fruits of their parents' induſtry; as many, that were born to no inheritance, have acquired one by their own. Again, Religion ſtrictly enjoins truth and juſtice in all our dealings: And long experience hath confirmed the truth of that common maxim, that honeſty is the beſt policy.—Further yet, Religion not only enjoins all thoſe virtues, by which eſtates are both acquired and preſerved, but it likewiſe as ſtrictly prohibits extravagance,

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idleneſs, pride, ambition, gluttony, drunkenneſs, lewdneſs, and all thoſe other vices, by which they are generally diſſipated and conſumed. If then, to get and to ſave be the ſureſt way to be rich, Religion directs a man into the proper way of doing both: And whatſoever the ſucceſs may be, yet an acquieſcence of mind in the diſpenſations of providence, without which no man can be truly rich, is never wanting in the religious man. Nor let it here be ſaid, that many have, on a ſudden, greatly enriched themſelves, by betraying the truſt repoſed in them, by lies and perjury, by fraud, extortion and oppreſſion. For though wicked men do often proſper in the world, and have riches in poſſeſſion, yet inward peace, contentment, a character, or ſomething elſe, without which they cannot be happy, is always wanting. Their riches are not a bleſſing but a curſe. And as theſe things ſometimes ſeem to have made themſelves wings, to fly to them; ſo generally, as if their wings were renewed for that very purpoſe, they of a ſudden take their flight, and leave their former unworthy poſſeſſors, diſappointed, amazed, undone.—Preternatural productions are ſeldom of long

continuance.

continuance. Hence, that obſervation of the Pſalmiſt, I ſaw the wicked in great proſperity, and flouriſhing like a green Bay-tree; I went by and lo! he was gone, I ſought him but his place could no where be found —How often are ſuch unrighteous men removed as it were in a moment from, or forced to reſtore their ill-gotten treaſures, and reduced to the greateſt poverty and miſery by their own iniquity!— For the moſt part the curſe of God lies heavy upon theſe gains of unrighteouſneſs, and conſumes them like a canker, till there be none remaining. Or perhaps the wealth of the wicked, which he is rather ſuffered to poſſeſs, than properly to enjoy; is laid up for the juſt, diverted by the interpoſition of an over-ruling providence, into a channel quite different from that, in which the unrighteous man hoped it would deſcend. Whilſt, on the contrary, the juſt man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, even to a thouſand generations.

In a word, it is God that giveth men power to get riches, and it is his bleſſing, that maketh truly rich: But though theſe ſentiments for want of faith, do not eaſily gain admiſſion into the

the hearts of worldly minded men, yet riches may very properly be placed in the left hand of that Queen, that ſtands in the wiſe man's imagination, as the proper emblem of Religion. But if after all a temporal affluence ſhould not be the portion of the righteous man, yet Religion will give him an internal poſſeſſion; I mean a reſigned will and a contented mind, without which all the riches in this world are mere poverty, jejune and meager things. It will alſo be the means of furniſhing him with all thoſe moral and Chriſtian graces and virtues; which with the proſpect of the glorious reward annexed to them, our Saviour calls the only true riches, of which the wicked man can have no ſhare, nor any hope without repenting and forſaking all his ſins, and walking in the paths of virtue and Religion.

HAVING thus found health and riches to be the general effects of a religious wiſdom, let us now enquire, whether honor be not ſo too.

THERE is an honor, which a man derives from the merit of his anceſtors, who have been

been uſeful in their generations; but this is merely providential, and quite extrinſic to the man himſelf. And if he does not imitate their virtues, the fame of his anceſtors will but ſerve to render him the more contemptible. This is all, that deſcent and pedigree, without Virtue and Religion, can do. Nobility and vice did never well agree together. High titles, without any excellence in the perſon, to whom they belong, are but great names of mere nothings. And what imaginable excellence can there be, where no virtue is to be found, which in the judgment of an Heathen writer, is the true nobility. Do but annex an honorable epithet to any wicked action or perſon, and you will ſoon perceive the manifeſt abſurdity. Adventitious honors, from whatſoever fountain they proceed, whether they come by long deſcent, or are of late creation, loſe their nature and their name, if not ſupported by real worth, by virtue, goodneſs and religion. It muſt be owned indeed, that great reſpect is uſually paid to authority, wealth and title; but when there are no good qualities in the poſſeſſor, he is ſecretly deſpiſed, and it is not to him, but to his power, wealth or title, the pretended homage is paid.

THERE is another kind of honor of much more value than the former, I mean a good name, an honor conſiſting in the eſteem and love of all honeſt and good men, the concurrent approbation of thoſe, that are beſt able to judge of real worth. This is one of the greateſt of all temporal bleſſings, rather to be choſen than great riches. Many have deſpiſed riches, and that honor that dependeth upon titles, conceiving more of burden and temptation, than real advantage to be in them. But no man did ever deſpiſe a good name, except he had either reſolved againſt doing, or did deſpair of being able to do any thing that might deſerve it. For this implies real merit in the perſon ſo eſteemed, and as it gives a man ſuch an intereſt in the affections of others, as will make them concerned for his welfare, and ready to aſſiſt him in every kind of danger or diſtreſs, it is the ſame thing with riches, or ſomething better; and as it enables him to be uſeful to his country and his friends, it is the ſame thing with power and authority.

Now this is that honor that is the proper reward of virtue, and is to be found in the ways

ways of wiſdom only. Take away Religion and Virtue, and you leave no foundation for eſteem or love, or commendation, either from God or man. It is the righteous man, that is more excellent than his neighbour: It is religious wiſdom, that is an ornament of grace unto the head, and chains of gold about the neck: It is this, that being exalted by thee, ſhall promote thee, and bring thee to honor. For God hath promiſed, that thoſe, that honor him, he will honor. Yea, this is an effect, that Virtue and Religion do produce by their own immediate efficacy; no natural cauſe more certainly producing its proper effect than theſe do produce love and eſteem. To believe a man to be good and virtuous is to honor him internally, and external honor is the natural teſtification of this our favorable opinion, by our words and actions. And, ſurely, the beſt way to be thought good, and commended accordingly, is to be good. A man may excel in power, learning and riches, all which will contribute to raiſe him into eſteem, but if we apprehend ſuch a man to be proud, cruel, inſolent, or under the dominion of any vice, he may be feared, envied, hated or deſpiſed, but

not beloved; his vices rendering him unworthy of thoſe advantages, and qualifying him but to do the greater miſchief in the world. On the other hand, ſuppoſe a man deſtitute of theſe advantages, yet if we believe him to be truly good, we cannot but entertain an high eſteem and veneration for him. Hence we do conclude, that to be religious, which includes every kind of virtue, is the ſureſt way to honor; and upon the whole, that length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honor.

And now it is not impoſſible, but that ſome objections againſt the truth of the ſeveral parts of this complex propoſition, ſo proved, as you have heard, may occur to your own thoughts. And particularly that religion enjoins ſome very expenſive duties, ſuch as liberality and charity to the poor, according to our ability and opportunities, whatſoever their diſtreſſes be — How then can it contribute to make men rich? But then we are to remember that as many vices, ſo likewiſe many virtues naturally introduce, and miniſter to each other. Thus frugality and induſtry are aſſiſtant to charity; and

and charity is a motive to frugality and induſtry. The charitable man will be frugal and induſtrious, that he may have to give to him that needeth, and by his prudence he ſaves, what his charity impairs. And thus the debts of one religious diſpoſition and duty are fully diſcharged by the good ſervices of others; the expences of the good man's charity being abundantly re-imburſed by his induſtry and good economy, but eſpecially by the bleſſing of providence upon his honeſt endeavours.

Hence it cometh to paſs, that he that ſcattereth his bread upon the waters, findeth it after many days, and he that watereth is watered alſo himſelf. For ſuch men are the peculiar favorites of Heaven; and for that reaſon they do often thrive and proſper beyond their own moſt ſanguine expectations, as many have with equal joy and gratitude confeſſed. It is again further objected, that according to the expreſs declarations of Holy Scripture, he, that will come after Chriſt, muſt deny himſelf and take up his croſs and follow him, and that we muſt not expect to enter into the kingdom of Heaven without paſſing through many difficulties;

ties; that all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution; that the world will revile them, and perſecute them, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt them; and who will ſay that perſecution is a friend to propriety and health; or revilings and reproaches, to reputation? But in general there is a truth implied in that queſtion of St. Peter, and who is he, that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? And who are they by whom men of real merit can be defamed? Why, only by men of proud, envious and malicious ſpirits, whoſe praiſe is diſpraiſe, whoſe arrows fly back from innocence, as from a ſhield of braſs; whoſe aſperſions no wiſe and good man ever regarded otherwiſe, than as ſpurs to greater induſtry, and motives to greater caution for the time to come. One general obſervation added to what has been ſaid will be a ſufficient anſwer to theſe objections, viz. that the various texts, which have been, and many more that might be quoted to the ſame purpoſe, do peculiarly relate to the infancy of Chriſtianity and are not equally applicable to all times and places. Such were the conditions of being the Diſciples of a crucified Jeſus, at the firſt introduction of his Religion into

into the world, when blind zeal heated by long confirmed prejudices and ſtrong apprehenſions of a ſubverſion of eſtabliſhed ſuperſtitions, and as was ſuggeſted by its adverſaries, of civil governments alſo, perſecuted his infant Church.

THEN, it was no wonder the preachers of this new doctrine were perſecuted, defamed, and counted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, being, with reſpect to this world, of all men the moſt miſerable. But this being a particular caſe can be no objection to a general truth. An open profeſſion of the doctrines and a ſincere practice of the duties of our Holy Religion, will be far from expoſing us to diſgrace and danger now. Kings and rulers have for many generations been nurſing fathers to the church of Chriſt, and its moſt furious adverſaries are now become its moſt zealous advocates and defenders. It is true indeed, that what hath been, may be again, and perhaps the ſooner for our unfruitfulneſs under the means of Grace, if we hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. But even then, it would be the higheſt wiſdom, in particular perſons, to live righteouſly, ſoberly and godly, in this preſent

ſent world, and to embrace Religion on account of its future, if not its preſent recompence of reward: Becauſe the ſufferings of this preſent life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall then be revealed. Thus hath God wiſely appointed, that, according to the uſual courſe of things, health, wealth and reputation ſhould be the common and natural, though not the conſtant effects of an upright and religious conduct. Did the falſe, the fraudulent, the ungrateful and unjuſt, never ſucceed, there would be no temptation to thoſe vices, and conſequently no room for the exerciſe of the oppoſite virtues. And on the other hand, were Virtue and Religion attended with length of days, riches and honors, men would uniformly purſue thoſe darling objects, through the paths of Religion, from mercenary views and mere worldly policy: And ſo their ſeeming virtue, wanting its genuine principle, would be but mere hypocriſy, and loſe its very name.

For theſe and many reaſons, it ſometimes pleaſes God to ſuffer the wicked to proſper, to enjoy health, wealth and honor for a time, that their fall may be the greater, and the more inſtructive,

ſtructive, when juſtice overtakes them. He alſo ſometimes ſuffers the righteous to be afflicted and deſpiſed, that their virtue may be rendered the more conſpicuous, by being ſo ſeverely tried; and that, by holding faſt their integrity, they may become the fitter objects of his favor, and receive a more glorious reward. Yet, after all, the direct road to the temporal bleſſings above mentioned, lies through the paths of wiſdom, i. e. of true Religion and real Virtue; and it will for ever remain generally true, that temperance and chaſtity do greatly contribute to extend human life to its utmoſt period, that induſtry, frugality, truth and juſtice, do in like manner tend to the increaſe of wealth; and honeſty, benevolence and charity, to the acquiſition of true honor and a laſting reputation; and indeed every virtue, in ſome degree, to the poſſeſſion of them all; or which is the ſame thing in other words, that length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand, riches and honor.

Do you then deſire to live long and ſee good days? Keep your bodies in temperance, ſoberneſs and chaſtity, refrain your tongue from

evil and your lips from ſpeaking guile; depart from evil and do good, ſeek peace and purſue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is againſt them, that do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from the earth. Would you be rich, contented and happy in the ſtate of life, which the good providence of God hath appointed you? Learn firſt to limit your deſires to your real wants, next let honeſt induſtry be employed to get, and decent frugality to ſave; then recommend yourſelves and your affairs to the favor both of God and man, by an upright and religious converſation, and you may be very ſure, that all thoſe real wants ſhall be ſupplied. For who that is old, how old ſoever he be, can truly ſay, I have ſeen the righteous forſaken, and his ſeed begging their bread?

LASTLY, do you deſire to appear good and amiable in the eyes of God and man? Take care to be really that, which you would be thought to be, and your expectation ſhall not be defeated. For this is the trueſt way to conciliate

conciliate the favor, eſteem and love of all thoſe, whoſe good opinion is worth a wiſe man's wiſh; and alſo what is of more worth than the united praiſes of men and Angels, the approbation of God, our Maker and our Judge, to whom be aſcribed all Power and Honor, Dominion and Majeſty, now and for ever.— *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.

Prov. iii. *Ver.* 16 *and* 17. *Length of Days is in her Right Hand, and in her Left Hand Riches and Honor.—Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.*

THERE are no leſs than five ſeveral propoſitions contained in the Text, wherein it is aſſerted, that health, wealth, honor, pleaſure and peace, are to be found in the ways of wiſdom, that is in the practice of piety and virtue. All theſe appear to be ſo many paradoxes to the carnal mind, but that which comes next to be proved, viz. that the greateſt pleaſures are to be found in the ways of wiſdom, appears

appears to ſuch a carnal mind the greateſt paradox of them all. Every negative precept of Religion is a reſtraint upon it; every poſitive one a moſt grievous impoſition. And is it poſſible you may ſay, that a man's ſentiments ſhould be ſo far altered, as that he ſhall find pleaſure in that, which gives him pain; and pain in that, which gratifies his keeneſt inclinations? The thing is not only poſſible, but certain. This the wiſe man hath affirmed; and I ſhall now endeavour to prove: Firſt, by enquiring into the ſeveral fountains, from which the good man's pleaſures flow; and, ſecondly, by making ſome general remarks upon the nature of thoſe pleaſures, from which their greatneſs and excellency will appear.

And, firſt, there is not an object of any one of our ſenſes that doth not afford the good, religious man a peculiar pleaſure. God created the earth for the uſe of man; and every thing therein was ſo formed, as to adminiſter to his ſupport, delight or comfort. The ſun, the moon and ſtars, are both uſeful and delightful to us. An infinite variety of colours, odours, taſtes and ſounds afford us a continual pleaſure.

Every

Every good thing we enjoy, naturally fills the pious ſoul with comfort. And as the goodneſs of God to man is infinite, ſo the good man's pleaſures have neither number nor end. But here ſome may ſay, have not the worſt of men as many ſenſes as the beſt, and are there not as many and various objects, wherewith they may be gratified? Why then ſhould not thoſe objects afford an equal pleaſure to the one as to the other? The reaſon is plain; the one conſiders them, as the effects of chance; and thinks himſelf under no obligation to any other being for any of his enjoyments: The other conſiders them as the effects of the Divine Goodneſs to him, which doubles his joy, and raiſes in him raptures of gratitude and praiſe: Whilſt the one is unmindful of the bounteous hand that continually ſuſtains and feeds him, the other diſcovers lively ſignatures of the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God in every object and every event. He can, with the utmoſt delight, join with the pious Pſalmiſt, and ſay, Oh! taſte and ſee how gracious the Lord is! Lord what is man, that thou viſiteſt him; or the ſon of man, that thou regardeſt him? Thou haſt made him a little lower than the Angels, and haſt crowned

crowned him with glory and worſhip. Thou haſt given him dominion over the works of thy hands, and put all things in ſubjection under his feet. O Lord our Governor how excellent is thy name in all the world! And thus he knows and feels, that it is a moſt joyful and pleaſant thing to be thankful; and that there is a pleaſure to be found in Religion, to which every wicked man is an entire ſtranger; a pleaſure, which he never yet taſted nor ever can, ſo long as he continues in an unbelieving and unconverted ſtate. Whilſt guilt and wickedneſs eclipſe the beauty of the creation, and poiſon every natural delight; Religion heightens them both, ſweetened by that innocence, and ſenſe of the Divine Goodneſs, with which they are enjoyed. Yea, ſo far does the good man's reliſh, even of the objects of ſenſe, exceed that of the wicked, that had not cuſtom limited the meaning of the word to ſuch, as wallow in falſe and forbidden pleaſures, the former might moſt properly be called the ſenſualiſt. But that which gives the religious man greatly the preeminence above the irreligious in point of pleaſure, is, that though both are alike liable to calamities, ſince the divine favor was forfeited by the

ſin

ſin of our firſt parents, yet the former can find a pleaſure under the moſt painful diſcipline. Whilſt the wicked man interprets afflictions into judgments, the terror of which fills his ſoul with inconceiveable agony, the good man conſiders them as the chaſtiſements of an affectionate father; and at the ſame time he feels the ſmart, yet as if he ſaw the tears in the fond parent's eyes, who weeps whilſt he corrects. He kiſſes the rod, loves though he fears, and is thankful to that gracious God, that gives him warning; that chaſteneth him, even as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.

ANOTHER fountain from which the good man's pleaſure ſprings, is a conſciouſneſs of his having forborne to do that, which God hath forbidden, and done that which he hath commanded. The religious man conſiders every temptation to ſin as a ſnare, that is laid for his life, intended to beguile him of his innocence and happineſs together, and to involve him in eternal miſery. For indeed every ſin expoſes the ſinner to the wrath of God, and is in its own nature mortal. And were it not, that God for Chriſt's ſake did remit our ſins upon our true

true repentance, every tranſgreſſion would be fatal. He, therefore, that hath reſiſted and overcome any temptation to do evil, finds a peculiar joy and pleaſure in his eſcape and victory, equal to that of the man, that hath happily defeated the ſecret plots of his moſt malicious enemies to deſtroy him; and on this further account can with a peculiar pleaſure, join in the Pſalmiſt's triumph, and ſay, Our ſoul is eſcaped as a bird out of the ſnare of the fowler, the ſnare is broken and we are delivered. And the oftener he hath reſiſted and overcome the temptations, that have aſſaulted him, ſtill the greater is his joy. Like to this is that pleaſure, which ariſeth from a conſcience of having done that which God hath commanded. For that which he hath commanded is good, and that which is good the human conſcience will approve. And how happy is he, who, when he reviews his paſt conduct, finds nothing done, that ought to have been omitted; nor any thing omitted, that ought to have been done. There is no pleaſure greater than that which ariſes from a juſt ſelf-approbation. If he be happy, that condemneth not himſelf in that which he alloweth; how much more happy muſt he be,

that commendeth himſelf in every thing he doth? His rejoicing is this, the teſtimomy of his conſcience that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity he hath had his converſation in the world. It was moſt juſtly ſaid, that to be able to enjoy our former life is to live twice. But the religious man can enjoy his paſt life, as often as he pleaſes to take a review of it. For in every ſuch review the ſame pleaſure will ariſe, from the ſame ſelf-approbation. And thus light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart, which flows within them, as from a perpetual ſpring. It hath been affirmed by Heathen writers, that virtue deſerves our higheſt affection and regard for its own ſake, and without reſpect to any future or preſent reward, except that, which ſprings out of itſelf: That if juſtice could be rendered viſible, ſo great and many are its charm, it would be amiable in the eyes of all men: That one day ſpent according to the rules of virtue, is preferable to immortality in a courſe of ſin. And what wonder is it, that it ſhould be ſo, when it is conſidered, that virtue in man is a tranſcript of the divine nature and perfections, which are the fountains of his own beatitude:

To

To illuſtrate and confirm what hath been aſſerted, I might here take occaſion to deſcribe the pleaſure that accompanies every particular act of duty, which Religion enjoins, and ſhew with what tranſport of gratitude the good man recounts the manifold inſtances of divine goodneſs towards him, with what comfort he lays open his wants and ſorrows to him, ſure of the ſucceſs of his prayers; with what delight he extends his charity to the poor and the diſtreſſed, eaſing the pain of his own compaſſion, and by relieving their wants, partaking of the joy he gives; with what inward ſatisfaction he conſiders himſelf as beloved by God and all good men; with what ſecurity he commits himſelf to the divine protection, when he lies down to reſt, well knowing that he, that keepeth Iſrael, will neither ſlumber nor ſleep; yea, with what aſſurance of hope he with his laſt breath commends his ſpirit into the hands of God, knowing whom he hath believed, and being perſuaded that he is able to keep that which he hath committed unto him againſt that day.

These hints are ſufficient to ſhew, that the practice of Religion is far from being ſuch a

taſteleſs, dry, inſipid thing, as he, that is an utter ſtranger to it, may ſuppoſe. For bleſſed is the man that hath not walked in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtood in the way of ſinners, nor ſate in the ſeat of the ſcornful; whoſe delight is in the law of the Lord; who meditates and exerciſes himſelf therein both day and night. To ſuch men that law is ſweeter than honey, and the droppings of the honey comb; dearer than thouſands of gold and ſilver.—It is a light unto their feet, and a lanthorn unto their paths. It is their guide by day, and their ſecurity by night; their comfort in diſtreſs, their eaſe in pain, their health in ſickneſs, and their life in death. They have no anxious doubts, nor evil-boding fears; no bitter remorſe, when they look backwards, nor black deſpair when they look forwards. Peace is in every thought, pleaſure in every action, in every proſpect hope and confidence.

But it is not thus with the ungodly. Their own conſciences condemn their actions. Fear, ſhame and remorſe, purſue the ſated appetite, and ſinful gratification. They dare not look within themſelves, their own deformity affrights them.

Like

Like ſinking prodigals, they have not the courage to examine their own accounts. In every involuntary retroſpect they find vexation and diſpleaſure, in every proſpect terror, judgment and deſpair. For the wicked are driven away in their wickedneſs, but the righteous hath hope in his death. And this naturally leads us to that proſpect of the future reward of his integrity; which is another fund of pleaſure to the religious man. He walketh by faith and not by ſight; and faith is to him the evidence of things not ſeen. He entirely depends upon the promiſe of God, becauſe he knows that God hath promiſed a ſure reward to the righteous; and that what he hath promiſed, he both can, and will perform: And, therefore, he ſtaggereth not through unbelief, but is ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; thinks nothing too hard to be done or ſuffered, ſo that he may but purchaſe the pearl of great price; conciliate the favor of God, and make his calling and election ſure. Thus Moſes choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon. For he had reſpect unto the recompence of reward. And thus have many Saints and Martyrs taken joyfully

joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, from a well-grounded expectation of inheriting the better and more enduring ſubſtance: They have been baniſhed from their native country, and lived as ſtrangers in foreign lands, without the leaſt complaint; becauſe they looked for a city, whoſe maker and builder is God. They have endured the moſt cruel perſecutions with invincible patience, fighting the good fight, finiſhing their courſe and keeping the faith, having their eye immovably fixed upon that Crown of Glory, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will aſſuredly give unto all them, that love his appearing.

If ſuch then be the effects of faith, if it will induce the good Chriſtian to pay ſo dear for the purchaſe, how great muſt be the pleaſure, that reſults from a well-grounded hope of the poſſeſſion. This they only, that have this hope, that is, that are truly good, can tell. They do rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory. But it is not ſo with the wicked; they can have no hope, that are without God in the world. On the contrary, to them there remaineth

maineth nothing, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

THUS have I briefly pointed out ſome of thoſe fountains, from which the pleaſures of true wiſdom or religion flow. Every good thing conſidered as coming from the bountiful hand of a good and gracious God; the conſcience of having reſiſted the many temptations, that have aſſaulted them; and faithfully performed that, which it was their duty to do; together with the proſpect of the glorious reward promiſed to their innocence and obedience are never failing funds of comfort, delight and pleaſure to every good and pious man.

I now proceed to make a few obvious remarks upon the nature of theſe pleaſures, from which their peculiar excellence may appear. And firſt, theſe pleaſures are chiefly ſeated in the mind, that more excellent part of the human compoſition, and are all reducible to the natural effects of having a conſcience void of offence both towards God and man. Now conſcience is doubtleſs the great repoſitory of all thoſe pleaſures, that can afford any ſolid comfort to the ſoul.—

When

When this is calm, ſerene and abſolving, then is the man in a proper capacity for enjoyment. Then he may enjoy himſelf, which he muſt be able to do, before he can enjoy any thing elſe. But nothing leſs than a pious life, formed exactly by the rules of true Religion, can authorize a man's conſcience to ſpeak comfortably to him. It is this that muſt word the ſentence before conſcience can pronounce it, and then it will do it with majeſty and authority; not whiſpering, but proclaiming a jubilee to the mind, peace and comfort to the ſoul. And what or where is the pleaſure that may be compared to this? The pleaſures flowing from a conſcience void of offence are not only greater than all other pleaſures, but much more laſting. Senſual pleaſures are of ſhort continuance, but thoſe of conſcience never ceaſe to entertain and enliven the ſoul with the moſt grateful reflexions, neither in this world nor in that which is to come.

SECONDLY, it is the property of theſe, that they never ſatiate; but what wicked man can ſay this of any of his pleaſures? Thoſe of the epicure expire in a moment, where exceſs and ſin commence, pleaſure terminates. Pleaſure dwells

dwells no longer upon the appetite than till the neceſſities of nature are provided for, and then all that follows is a load and an oppreſſion. Nor is that man leſs deceived, who thinks to maintain a conſtant ſucceſſion of pleaſure by a continual purſuit of ſports and paſtimes, thoſe vain and idle amuſements of the world. As theſe refreſh a man when he is weary, ſo do they weary him when he is refreſhed; an evident demonſtration, that God never deſigned them to employ ſo great a part of our time, as too oft they do. Where is the man that would not think it the greateſt torment and calamity that could befal him, ſhould he be obliged to follow his cards or dice, his routs and revels, his gluttony and drunkenneſs every day? How much more happy is the poor mechanic, that riſes early and labours hard for a few pence a day? Cuſtom having naturalized his labour to him, his ſhop is his element, and he cannot with any enjoyment of himſelf live out of it. But no cuſtom can make the pain of a ſurfeit or debauch eaſy or pleaſant, becauſe they are unnatural, and nothing that is unnatural can be pleaſant. God has given to no man a body ſo ſtrong, as ſome men's vicious appetites are,

but hath corrected the extravagance of voluptuous desires, by contracting our capacities for the enjoyment of them. Such are not the pleasures of the religious man. No man ever yet was weary of thinking that he had acted well and wisely; that he had conquered this or that dangerous temptation; that he had performed his duty to God or man; or that he had a well grounded confidence towards God, and a joyful prospect of a glorious reward. These are delights, that grow and improve under thought and reflexion, and while they exercise, endear themselves to the mind.

THERE is yet one other property belonging to the pleasures derived from Religion, that gives them a peculiar excellence, viz. that it is in no man's power to deprive us of them: They are out of the reach of violence or detraction. He that hath the property may be sure of the perpetuity. We are generally at the mercy of rapine, avarice or ambition, whether we shall enjoy those objects, on which the happiness of mere worldlings must depend. If we build our felicity upon our estates, we may be

be happy as long as the oppreſſor, if upon our reputation, as long as the ſlanderer, will give us leave. But when our concernments take up no more compaſs than our own perſons, as long as we know where to breathe we alſo know where to be happy. And if we can but prevail upon ourſelves to be innocent and good, we need not go abroad to know our own characters. The pleaſures of this kind are eaſy and portable, ſuch as the good man carries about with him, in his own boſom, without alarming the eye or envy of the world. If he can but make his duty his delight; if he can entertain his mind with pious meditations and virtuous practices, no power nor malice can deprive him of his pleaſure. It is as free as his will, no more to be controlled than his choice, no more to be limitted than the range of his thoughts. Nor are theſe pleaſures out of the reach of outward violence only, but alſo of thoſe things, which lie much cloſer to us, even the infirmities and irreſiſtible decays of nature. When age itſelf, which cannot be reſiſted, ſhall begin to remind us of our mortality, by infirmities and pains, by deadneſs of limbs and dulneſs of ſenſes, theſe pleaſures of the

mind will be in their full youth and vigour.—No adverſe ſtroke of fortune, no diſeaſe of the body can impair the pleaſure that reſults from conſcious innocence and true piety. This lies within, centers in the heart, grows into the very ſubſtance of the ſoul. It accompanies a man to the grave, he never outlives it; becauſe he cannot outlive himſelf. Yea, it goes along with him into eternity. For ſurely a reflection upon that wiſdom, by which he became obedient to the divine will, of which his then unalterable and ineffable happineſs will be the gracious reward, can never ceaſe to be the object of his thoughts, or to repleniſh his ſoul with pleaſures not now to be conceived.

And here poſſibly you may be deſirous to be informed, whether the pleaſures we have been deſcribing, will be the immediate conſequence of a real converſion. To this I anſwer, that all things are poſſible with God, but ordinarily it is not ſo with the new convert. We are not born into the world, nor ſhall we be born again to a ſpiritual life without ſome pain. The ſtrong man armed is not ſo eaſily diſpoſſeſſed. The tranſition from a reprobate to a regenerate

regenerate ſtate, from a love of vice to an averſion to it, and from an averſion to virtue to a love of it, is not commonly ſo quick and eaſy; though the thought of our being grown wiſer may afford us ſome comfort; yet the conſideration of our former wickedneſs and folly, if ſpiritual pride hath not deprived us of all remembrance, muſt occaſion ſome degree of ſhame and pain within us. The pleaſures that reſult from being and doing good, is not the conſequence of a bare reſolution to be, or to do, but of actually being and doing good.—But let this be no diſcouragement: Though the cure of a mortification be painful, it is not ſo bad as the diſeaſe. Do but begin to be truly religious, and reſolve to perſevere in a courſe of virtue and piety, till you have gained an abſolute maſtery over your irregular appetites and paſſions, and brought every thought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt, and then as maturity alters the reliſh and corrects the follies of childhood and youth, you will ſoon find a ſtrange alteration in all your deſires and delights, always in proportion to the progreſs you have made. And in the end you will be convinced by the beſt of proofs, your own experience,

perience, that the ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. And that the path of the juſt is like the dawning light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

And now I hope I ſhall not be thought to advance any thing contrary to the truth, or that looks like a paradox, if I ſay, that to exhort men to be religious is but in other words, to exhort them to conſult their pleaſure. A pleaſure high, rational and angelical, ſeated in the ſoul, and equal to all its capacities: A pleaſure embaſed with no appendant ſting, no conſequent loathings or bitter farewells: A pleaſure that never wearies, never cloys, but ſtill improves upon enjoyment: A pleaſure neither liable to accident nor expoſed to injury; a joy that no man giveth or taketh from us; the foretaſte of Heaven and the earneſt of eternity; what the Apoſtle calls a joy in the Holy Ghoſt, becauſe it is not only the natural effect of an holy obedience, but alſo the work of that divine ſpirit within the ſoul of man, ſweetning and encreaſing all thoſe ſprings, from which the good man's pleaſures flow.

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In a word, it is that pleaſure, which being begun in grace here paſſes into glory and immortality hereafter, and into that bleſſedneſs, which neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived.

I might now proceed to ſhew in the laſt place, that peace is as cloſely connected with Religion, as any of the former temporal bleſſings are, even as any natural effect with the cauſe producing it. But this I think muſt neceſſarily follow from what hath been ſaid in this and the former diſcourſe: For if the religious man be at peace in his own breaſt; if there be few, that will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good; if, when a man's ways pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him; if the religious man's conduct hath a natural tendency to conciliate the favor and friendſhip both of God and man; if there can be no pleaſure, where there is no peace, and there can be no peace to the wicked; as not only experience, but the Holy Scriptures teſtify; and yet the moſt pure and perfect pleaſures are to be found in the ways of Religion, then I preſume it will not be neceſſary

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to offer any more arguments in proof of this laſt propoſition, but may take it for granted, that not only health, wealth, honor and pleaſure, but peace alſo is the natural effect of a virtuous and religious converſation; that length of days is in the right hand of wiſdom, and in her left hand riches and honor; that her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. That Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

To conclude, let us devoutly pray, that God would give us grace to ſeek for pleaſure and peace in the ways of Religion only, where only, true joys are to be found, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; to whom, with God, the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be rendered and aſcribed, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen*

FINIS.

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